

"People of all shapes and sizes come to the ballet class. Some 30-year-olds are crazy about it." **Page 10**



"By 2008, Beijing plans to have 13.3 million square meters of organic orchards." **Page 14**



It was the most touching moment, when Shijun found Manzhen. **Page 11**



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By Sun Yongjian

"My office used to be crowded with sales reps from coal suppliers eager to sign a deal, but now we have to go begging to them for an acceptable price," complained the general manager of one of China's five major power generating corporations, who declined to be identified.

China's rapidly developing economy has led to an escalating demand for electricity in recent years, a demand that power suppliers are finding it increasingly difficult to meet while retaining economic viability.

The growing demand, coupled with the gradual relaxation of governmental control of state owned enterprises has led to a major shift in the relationship between power suppliers and coal suppliers. At the annual Coal Trade Fair, which ended Monday in Qinhuangdao, Hebei Province, power companies found themselves in the unfamiliar position of negotiating prices in a seller's market.

Unfair trade fair

The ten-day government sponsored fair ended with many participants coming away less than satisfied with the results.

The fair provides a meeting place coal suppliers and consumers from all over the country. Some 278 power generating enterprises and an even greater number of coal suppliers attended. Representatives from the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) and various local governments also participated.

By the afternoon of the second last day, the five largest domestic power groups, China Huaneng Group, China Datang Corporation, China Huadian Corporation, China Guodian Corporation and China Power Investment Corporation had signed contracts on the purchase of 140 million tons of coal for power generation, less than half of the 2005 target purchase goal of 288 million tons.

The lack of success in fulfilling quotas poses an added problem for the power companies, which are required to submit purchase contracts to the Ministry of Railways by January 8 in order to arrange for the transportation of the coal.

Price ceiling ignored

The power companies complain that they have been unable to negotiate a satisfactory price with the coal suppliers because prices have risen in excess of the ceiling.

According to the policy set by the NDRC, coal prices are allowed to rise by no more than 8 percent on the contract price of last year, however coal suppliers have largely ignored this ruling, in some cases demanding almost 20 percent more than last year's prices.

Shanxi Province has offered a price of 255 yuan for per ton, 40 yuan more than last year; Henan

Province has raised its asking price by 45 to 50 yuan per ton on the basis of last September's price of 275 yuan.

A vice president of Shanxi Chengzhen Coal Company, who declined to give his name, said it was impossible for the power companies to insist on the 8 percent ceiling. More than half of the contracts signed by the five major power companies were in excess of the price ceiling.

A general manager of one of the five major power groups, who also declined to be identified, complained that purchase negotiations were too difficult, because the prices suppliers were demanding were simply too high. "The high purchase price of coal will eventually lead to the increasing cost of generating power, which will eventually mean lower profits for the power companies, higher deficits, or even bankruptcy," he said.

"We have sent a delegation of more than 100, by January 7, their expenses exceeded 1.1 million yuan. But if we can purchase 50 million tons of coal at price within the 8 percent ceiling, we can expect to save at least 500 million yuan," he added.

"We told our negotiators to insist on the ceiling. We will not

give up until the last ton of coal is purchased," he said.

Mei Junchao, board secretary of Heilongjiang Power, complained that the coal suppliers not only insist on a high price, but also demand that the purchasers pay first, otherwise they will refuse to supply the coal.

Root of the conflict

At the coal trade fair in Fuzhou, Fujian Province last year, the NDRC set a price rise limit of not more than 12 yuan per ton. Consequently, 90 percent of the available contracts were signed, for a total of 480 million tons of coal, but only a very small percentage of these were actually implemented.

Coal mined in China falls into two categories; that which is allocated directly by the government, and that which is sold according to market demand. However the enterprises involved in state-planned coal mining deal exclusively with state-planned power generating enterprises, excluding private and foreign invested power suppliers.

In 2003, the nation's increasing thirst for power triggered a surge in the price of coal sold according to market demand. Also, coal has been in shorter supply because the government

has closed many small, privately operated coal mines due to heavy casualties resulting from unsafe work practices.

The price for the state-controlled coal supply has thus become less attractive for coal suppliers, because it is much lower than that of the market coal supply. Some coal mines have even had to break contracts with power companies so as to maintain their profits.

Last July, following the submission of a letter to the State Council by the five major domestic giant power groups on the issue, Premier Wen Jiabao called for the stabilization of coal prices, according to a report in the *Financial Times* on July 26.

Coal futures market

The vice-president of a power company, who declined to give his name, complained that some coal suppliers had been reluctant to fulfill mid and long term contracts that could not bring immediate profits.

The government has stated explicitly that it will not allow the bankruptcy of major power suppliers, despite negotiations not being successful, he said.

Furthermore, the conflicts between power and coal suppliers have brought the problem to

light, which would allow a solution to be found, he added.

Li Xuegang, general manager of Qinhuangdao Coal Transaction Center, revealed that the center will launch a coal futures transaction mechanism, as a means of stabilizing mid and long term coal prices.

However many market analysts remain less than optimistic about the viability of such a center, arguing that it is very difficult to draw up the implementation rules. In the meantime, the coal industry remains stuck between the planned economy and the market economy.

Trade fairs are a key mechanism for the power companies and coal suppliers, as well as for the state run rail transport system. Government figures reveal that 70 percent of the coal consumption of state owned power enterprises, and 50 percent of coal consumption of the metal smelting industry rely on such fairs, as well as 20 percent of the country's total rail transportation.

Yi Xianrong, president of the Finance Institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said that the government sponsored fairs will ultimately fail because they are a relic of the planned

economy. He argued that coal suppliers and power companies should be allowed to implement transactions in accordance with market rules.

Yi said that at present, coal prices are determined by the market, but power prices are still controlled by the government. If that control were relaxed, power price rises will actually slow down.

However An Dongjian, an associate researcher at the China Academy of Social Sciences, stressed that the power prices should not be decided by the market, because the power companies' costs will rise when coal prices go up, thus the cost of power generating will also rise, which will lead to instability in the national economy. Such fairs are therefore still necessary, he said.

Ge Zhenxiang, a researcher at the State Power Economic Research Center, said that at present, coal prices and power prices are under different systems, while most energy related enterprises are state owned. The state will not relax its control of power prices because China is heavily dependant on its manufacturing industry – once power prices are determined by the market, many large power consumers will not be able to bear the resulting price rises.

Dai Yande, vice-president of the NDRC's Energy Sources Institute, stressed that power prices in other countries are not fully determined by the market. In some countries, power supply and generation are balanced. But in China, power is in short supply, so power prices cannot be decided by the market, he said.

A program to peg power prices to coal prices has been approved by the State Council, which means that coal prices will be adjusted in accordance with market demand, power prices will be adjusted accordingly, and coal for power generating will be sold at less than the regular market price.

CEO of China Energy Net, Han Xiaoping, pointed out that the state owned Shenhua Group is running soundly in the current energy crisis, because it has integrated several areas of energy sources such as power, communications and coal mining, showing that conflicts between different energy sectors can be resolved internally.

More state owned enterprises should follow the example of Shenhua Group, he said. For example, state owned power companies could integrate oil refining, coal mining, railway construction, and in this way, conflicts between enterprises in the different energy sectors can be resolved.

(Source: Beijing News)

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Tax Chief Explains Revenue Increase against GDP

By Nie Zhiyang

China's total tax revenue in 2004 was 2.57 trillion yuan, up 25.7 percent on 2003, according to Xie Xuren, commissioner of China's State Administration of Taxation (SAT) at a press conference Tuesday.

Four reasons were offered by the tax chief for the tax ratio rising at a faster rate than the GDP growth rate of 9 percent for the same period.

The 2004 GDP ratio growth

of 9 percent was calculated on the basis of comparable price. However it would hit 15 percent if calculated instead on current price, which is the basis used for the tax calculation.

Secondly, concerning the structure of the growth, it mainly resulted from the rapid development of the second and the third industries, which led to an increase in major tax sources like value added tax, consuming tax and business

tax, and logically, the sharp rising in tax revenue. Taking the second and third industries alone, they had a much higher ratio than the GDP.

Thirdly, the high rate of imports subtracts from the GDP calculation, but at the same time adds to the tax calculation. With 30 percent growth, last year's imports supplied an addition 90 billion yuan, or 33 percent, for taxation.

Meanwhile, greater efforts

were made to settle tax rebate arrears. Such steps contributed a further 60 to 70 billion yuan and two to three percentage points to revenue growth.

After reviewing last year's tax work, with historical breakthroughs both on total volume and growth, Xie said growth in 2005 would maintain a stable rate and would not witness another jump like 2004.

When questioned about the future situation for fuel tax, an

issue of wide concern to the public, Xie said that current high oil prices and other uncertainties made an accurate forecast difficult.

At the same conference, deputy tax commissioner Wang Li said that no immunity would be offered to foreign residents in China and Chinese from Hong Kong and Macao on paying income tax from July 1 this year, as they had already been granted sufficient time by the taxation administration to pay arrears.

National Expressway Network Launched

China will invest two trillion yuan (some US \$240 billion) in the 85,000-kilometer-expressway network scheduled to be built in the coming 30 years, Zhang Chunxian, minister of communications said yesterday at a press conference held by the Information Office of State Council.

Formed by seven lines from Beijing, nine lines from north to south and 18 from east to west, the network will connect all cities with a population above 200,000.

From now to 2010, the

annual investment will run from 140 billion yuan (US \$17 billion) to 150 billion yuan (\$18 billion), while from 2010 to 2020, the annual investment will be around 100 billion yuan (\$12 billion), said Zhang.

The construction fund will come from vehicle purchase tax, fees and taxes collected by local governments, state bonds, domestic and foreign investment, said Zhang.

By the end of 2004, 34,000 kilometers of expressway was in use in China.

(Xinhua)

Government to Establish Financial Policy Committee

By Qiu Jiaoning

The central government is planning to set up a Financial Policy Committee (FPC), director of the General Office of the Ministry of Finance Wang Baoan said Tuesday. Speaking in Guangdong at the annual conference of the Chinese Finance Association, Wang said the Ministry of Finance had listed the issue on its agenda, *China Business News* reported Wednesday.

"There are conflicts between the sharp increase in financial revenue and the deficiency of financial control. The establishment of the FPC aims at controlling the nation's overall finances effectively," said Wang.

A report by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences says that the concept of an FPC was formally put forward in December 2004. The report said that it is essential to establish such a committee, so as to ensure the decision procedure for financial policies is more scientific and democratic.

According to the report, the committee should either be established directly under the Ministry of Finance, or by first establishing a Financial Policy Bureau, which would recruit experts to organize a Financial Policy Committee. Alternatively, it could be set up as a discussion department for official business directly under the State Council.

2 Trillion to Fund Railway Construction

By Chu Meng

China will soon open up its monopolized markets of railway construction to both domestic and foreign design and construction companies, in a bid to attract top-qualified constructors and large-scale investment to the market, according to a joint announcement by the ministries of construction and railways Saturday.

Zhang Jianping, vice director-general of the Ministry of Railway's Development and Planning Department told *People's Daily* Monday, "Railway constructors have an unprecedented opportunity as the State Council has approved an ambitious goal of building 28,000 kilometers of railways by the year 2020."

Under the plan, China's railway network will be extended from the current 72,000 kilometers to 100,000 kilometers by 2020, the ratio of double-track railways and electrified lines will both reach 50 percent, and major railway technology and equipment will reach or approach interna-

tional advanced levels.

"The highlight of the plan is that private capital will be allowed to fund railway construction. Operators of railways will be transformed into independent economic entities with diverse shareholders. Such financing methods can be adopted on branch lines and popular routes with large passenger flows, such as the Beijing-Shanghai route," Zhang said. Opening the railway construction market is of crucial importance, he stressed.

Based on the announcement, top level design institutes and constructors from home and abroad can now bid for contracts for track, bridge and tunnel projects.

The total needed investment in railway construction will exceed 2 trillion yuan by 2020, which means an annual investment volume of 100 billion or more. Loans from Chinese and foreign banks are the main sources of capital, and are insufficient for the increasing capital demand.



China and the US held a round table conference in Beijing Thursday on the protection of intellectual property rights. Chinese Vice-premier Wu Yi and US Secretary of Commerce Donald Evans participated in the talks. The participants later signed a visitor's book offered by the Motion Picture Association of America.

Xinhua Photo

Cultural Heritage Status Sought for Traditional Medicine

By Annie Wei

The State Administration of Chinese Traditional Medicine is preparing a submission to UNESCO to have traditional Chinese medicine listed as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, *People's Daily* reported last Friday.

UNESCO defines an oral and intangible cultural heritage as the practices, representations, expressions and knowledge and skills that communities recognize as part of their cultural heritage. There are currently 47 exam-

ples of such masterpieces on the, including Chinese kunqu opera and guqin music.

The draft of the application, covering Chinese therapy, traditional Chinese medicine and minority nationalities' medicine has been completed and will be submitted within the year.

Shen Zhixiang, director of the administration's Department of International Cooperation was quoted in the article as saying that traditional Chinese medicine is the merit of Chinese culture with many years of development and innovation, com-

pleted theory and rich clinic experience.

The lodging of the application will push forward the protection and development of traditional Chinese medicine, Shen said.

A meeting of the World Health Organization in May 2003 declared that acupuncture and traditional Chinese medicine are gaining more and more public attention and playing an important role in daily health care.

According to an article in *China View* on Monday, the influence of traditional Chinese medicine is expanding internationally, and China had signed an agreement with 51 countries on its use by the end of 2004.

13 Central Enterprises Lodge Irregular Financing Reports

By Chu Meng

An audit of 181 central enterprises' financing reports has revealed that 13 enterprises lodged irregular or unqualified finance reports and a further 120 failed to submit overall financing reports, the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council (SASAC) revealed to Xinhua Monday.

Meng Jianmin, director-

general of SASAC's Bureau of Statistics and Evaluation said, "Irregular financing reports from central enterprises accounted for 8 percent of the 181 audited enterprises."

He further explained, however, that these 13 central enterprises did not make fraudulent financing reports, as had been widely reported. Their reports are irregular or unqualified in terms of accuracy and comprehensiveness,

but not fraudulent.

According to criteria established by SASAC, many other remarkable problems emerged through this round of auditing. Some 80 enterprises lost more than 10 percent of their total assets, including half of which lost more than 20 percent. Some 92 enterprises did not appoint chief financial officers at all.

Meng added that most of the unqualified financing reports resulted from irresponsible financing by intermediary agencies, which helped make unrealistic financing records on the profit-making basis only.

Annual Foreign Trade Hits \$1.15 Trillion

By Pan Hao

China's foreign trade reached an annual turnover of US \$1.15 trillion in 2004, an increase of 35.7 percent on 2003. The figures were released Tuesday by the General Administration of Customs in its annual report.

According to the report, exports in 2004 were worth \$593.36 billion, an increase of 35.4 percent against 2003, while imports were worth \$561.38 billion, up 36 percent. The figures show a trade surplus of 31.98 billion.

The European Union became China's biggest trading partner in 2004, with turnover between China and European countries reaching \$177.28 billion, an increase of 33.6 percent, while trade with the US ranked second, with a turnover of \$169.62 billion, an increase of 34.3 percent. Japan ranked third, with a \$167.87 billion turnover.

Turnover between China and Hong Kong amounted to US \$112.67 billion and turnover between China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations was \$105.88 billion.

Bank Watchdog Tightens Internal Control Rules For Commercial Banks

By Sun Yongjian

China's banking watchdog issued a new regulation on Sunday urging commercial banks to strengthen internal control.

Pilot Rules for the Assessment of Internal Control Systems in Commercial Banks, issued by the China Banking Regulatory Commission (CBRC), will take effect from February 1. The regulation builds a new framework for assessing the efficiency of the internal control scheme of commercial banks, with updated standards and models that comply with international conventions.

A CBRC spokesman said that frequent cases of financial crime in recent years show there are significant defects in the current internal control systems of commercial banks.

The new rules are necessary to establish an effective mechanism of risk recognition and assessment, the spokesman said.

US Extends Visas for Chinese

By Pan Hao

The US Embassy in Beijing announced last Friday that from January 15, it will begin issuing to qualified Chinese citizens business (B-1) or pleasure (B-2) visas that are valid for 12 months and multiple entries. The previous maximum validity of US visas for these purposes was six months.

China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has also agreed to issue similar visas to American citizens visiting China. While China and the US will in principle issue maximum validity visas to each other's citizens, on a case by case basis each side may limit the period of validity and number of entries as required by law and regulation.

Transnational Corporations Seek Transition Period for Tax Changes

By Chu Meng

A group of 54 transnational corporations in China submitted a report to the State Council on January 5, asking that the government grant them a 5 to 10 year's transition period of favored tax rate should a new taxation policy taxing domestic and foreign enterprises at the same rate be adopted.

China Business News reported Saturday that as early as November 2004, financial and taxation experts from those corporations held a summit to discuss potential affects such a policy would have. They all expressed the hope that the government would maintain their favored tax policy while improving the taxation system in the area of research and development.

They stressed that providing a stable and highly transparent policy, as well as maintaining a comparatively low and simple tax rate would attract more foreign investors.

Major Merger Forms City's Biggest SOE

By Chu Meng

The merger of local natural gas provider Beijing Gas Group Corp. and Beijing Holdings (Jingtai Group) last Saturday has given rise to the capital's biggest state-owned enterprise, Beijing Enterprises Holdings (Group) Corp., a public relations officer from the company confirmed on Tuesday.

Beijing Enterprises Holdings controls total funds and assets of 37 billion yuan.

"The regrouping is an unprecedented coalition of state-owned assets crossing industries and borders," Yi Xiqun, chairman of the

board at Beijing Enterprises was quoted as saying by Xinhua at the foundation ceremony last Saturday.

The combination of Beijing Gas' infrastructure and public utility status and Beijing Holding's strong financing channels and companies listed in China and abroad, would give Beijing Enterprises a strong platform for continuing to develop the gas market in Beijing and offer competitive related services, Yi said.

When Beijing Holdings listed in Hong Kong in 1997, it set a new record for size of initial public offering and paved the way for a new direction in the devel-

opment of Beijing's economy. The companies under the former Beijing Holding's umbrella, including Capital Airport Expressway, Yanjing Corp., Sanyuan Foods, Wangfujing Department Store and Great Wall Hotel, are strong players in the city's infrastructure, consumer products, tourism, retail and technology industries.

"Since the regrouping, our company has set targets of standardizing operations in the gas and tap water areas," Yi said. "And the Bank of Beijing signed an 8 billion yuan loan agreement with us after our foundation ceremony."

RMB Cards OK for Use Outside China

As of Monday, holders of Chinese currency UnionPay banking cards can now use them to pay for shopping purchases, dining, travel expenses, medical bills and to extract cash in local currency in South Korea, Thailand and Singapore. It is the first time a domestic card has been approved for use outside China and came after the cards became valid in Hong Kong and Macao over the past two years.

China UnionPay Presidnet Wan Jianhua (left) attends a ceremony celebrating the start of card use in Sigapore on Tuesday.

Xinhua Photo



Offshore Oil Giant Stepping Up International Cooperation

By Xu Chuanmei

US-based oil giant ConocoPhillips recently announced it has approved approximately \$1.8 billion for the second development phase of the Penglai (PL) 19-3 oil field in China's Bohai Bay. Sanction of the project is subject to approval of the overall development plan by the Chinese National Development and Reform Commission.

ConocoPhillips has been working with China National Offshore Oilfield Corp. (CNOOC) in developing the PL 19-3 field and the development plan was approved by both sides, Xiao Zongwei from CNOOC's investor relations department said.

The offshore oil field, China's largest with an estimated 267 million barrels of reserves, was discovered in 1999 by ConocoPhillips. CNOOC has a 51 percent working interest in the PL 19-3 field's development and ConocoPhillips holds the remaining 49 percent.

Though China's appetite for energy is only increasing as its economy continues to boom, the country's onshore oil fields are in decline. State-owned CNOOC has therefore been more active in arranging international cooperation since 2001, particularly in the area of off-shore oil developments. The second development phase of the PL 19-3 field is intended to make a major contribution towards China's efforts to overcome its heavy reliance on imported oil.

CNOOC could offer more than \$13 billion to take over US-based oil group Unocal, the *Financial Times* said last Friday. If such a deal goes through, it will be the most significant overseas acquisition ever by a Chinese company.

Xiao declined to comment on the report, but did express confidence in his company's international holdings. "Almost all of our overseas projects are going very well. The fields we bought in the beginning of 2002 in Indonesia have turned out to be a great success and we have recovered nearly 60 percent of our initial investment," he said.

CNOOC paid \$585 million in January 2002 to buy Spain-based Repsol-YPF's Indonesian oil operations, making the Chinese company the largest offshore oil producer in Indonesia.

UBS Inks China Joint Venture Deal

UBS, Europe's biggest bank by total assets, made a further strategic push into China on Tuesday with plans to develop into fund management.

Switzerland's biggest bank is joining forces with the State Development Investment Corporation (SDIC) to form a joint-venture fund-management company to tap into the growing affluence of the world's most populous country.

Under the deal, awaiting final approval from China's securities regulator, UBS will buy 49 percent of China Dragon Fund Management, a Shenzhen-based vehicle owned by state-controlled SDIC.

China Dragon, which manages 3.2 billion yuan (\$386 million) in mutual fund assets, will be restructured as a joint venture between UBS and SDIC Hongtai Trust & Investment, a wholly-owned SDIC subsidiary. No

price for the deal was disclosed.

The two owners intend to use China Dragon as a platform for new mutual funds. Once regulations permit, they may also push into discretionary investment management and other activities.

The bank has been pushing hard into China: among its activities is a prominent role in the securities markets, where it is one of the leading foreign players. In late 2003, UBS was the first institution to be granted Qualified Foreign Institutional Investor status, providing direct access to the domestic equity and debt markets.

"China is a key strategic market for all of UBS. This is an important step in our strategy to build a major presence in China's asset management industry as market liberalization continues," said John Fraser, head of UBS's asset man-

agement activities.

UBS joins a growing list of foreign financial institutions forming joint ventures with Chinese asset management companies, including Merrill Lynch. All have been eager to invest in China's vast savings pool as investment controls have been gradually relaxed. Foreign institutions argue that they can offer advanced portfolio management and risk assessment skills through such joint ventures.

The new company will be one of the first to benefit from rules allowing foreign institutions to own up to 49 percent of Chinese fund management operations.

"Our partnership with an international institution of UBS's stature will serve to introduce international best practices to the joint venture," said Shi Hongxiang, vice-president of SDIC and chairman of SDIC Hongtai.

(FT.com)

New Car Joint Venture Approved in Nanjing

By Annie Wei

The central government last Friday gave its stamp of approval to a joint venture car manufacturing plant to be established by Ford, Mazda and Changan Automobile Group in the Jiangning Economic and Technology Development Zone in Nanjing, Jiangsu Province.

The three sides announced the same day that the 190,000 square meter facility would be set up with an investment of 4 billion yuan and have an initial manufacturing capacity of 160,000 units a year that could be expanded to 200,000 units annually.

The flexible plant could produce different Ford and Mazda vehicles, Changan Automotive Group said in a statement.

The facility should be up and running in June.

The joint venture is part of the \$1 billion that Ford Motor Chairman and CEO Bill Ford said the company would invest in this country during a trip to China in October 2003.

Ying Zhanwang, former vice president of technology at Changan Ford, has been appointed general manager of the new plant. Masahiro Araki, former production engineering division manager of Mazda Motor Corp., has been named vice president of operations and Albert Li, former CFO of Ford Motor (China), will be vice president of business operations.

CapitaLand Buys More Malls

By Deng Minjie

Singapore-based CapitaLand announced its wholly-owned subsidiary CapitaLand Retail China (CRC) had signed a deal with Beijing Hualian Group Investment Holding Co. on January 4 to acquire two shopping malls for 1.746 billion yuan, *Beijing Youth Daily* reported last Saturday.

The deal calls for CapitaLand to assume complete ownership of the Wangjing Shopping Mall, currently under construction, and the Anzhen Shopping Mall, though Hualian will maintain management of that retail center. The two sides will also establish a 50-50 joint venture to provide marketing and retail management services at the Wangjing mall and other CRC properties in the future.

"With this joint venture, our group has significantly moved into China's fast growing retail property market," an employee from CapitaLand's public relations department told *Beijing Today* on Wednesday.

"We have established distinctive competitive advantages by gaining access to quality assets in China's capital city backed by Beijing Hualian's strong local brand name."

Last December, CapitaLand, Southeast Asia's largest property developer, established a joint venture with Shenzhen International Trust & Investment Co. to buy and manage six shopping malls in China that will open between mid-2005 and early 2006.

Bank Of Beijing Seeking Foreign Investors

By Pan Hao

The newly renamed Bank of Beijing is talking with foreign financial institutions about purchasing nearly a quarter of its shares on the road towards holding an initial public offering in around two years, bank Chairman Yan Bianzhu announced last Saturday.

The bank was in talks with at least two potential foreign investors to sell a total of 24.4 percent stake, Bloomberg reported the same day.

A source from the bank who requested anonymity told *Beijing Today* that Deutsche Bank was likely to pick up a 23.8 percent stake in the bank.

Meng Yuanhui of Bank of Beijing's public relations department on Tuesday did not disclose details on which foreign institutions the bank was talking with and when results might come out.

Bank of Beijing was also planning to launch a bank just for women, the first of its kind in the capital, by the end of the month, Meng said. The bank would be aimed at white-collar women and provide financial management training and other services above normal bank services.

The location of the women's bank had not been settled, but it would likely be in Jiuxianqiao or Wangjing in Chaoyang District, he said.

Country's First Gold Trading Center Opens in Shandong

By Deng Minjie

The first professional gold trade market in China opened for business in Jinan, capital of Shandong Province, last Saturday.

State-owned Shangdong Gold Corp. (SGC) has invested around 50 million yuan in the project, intended to provide investors rock bottom prices on gold bars. The company actually produces the Taishan-brand bars sold at the center, which have gold content above 99.99 percent. Transaction values are based on quotation prices on London's gold market.

One fourth of China's gold output comes from Shandong Province. The new center should prove a good platform for the transfer of more Shandong gold from production points to trading centers.

China Life's Listing Plan Still on Track

By Sun Yongjian

New China Life Insurance Co. has not given up its plans to list on the domestic stock market and will go through with its plan to raise capital once China's securities market rises from its current slump, Chairman Guan Guoliang told the *Beijing News* last Friday.

The company had been planning its domestic initial public offering since 2002 and many market analysts had speculated China Life would be the first domestic insurer to list, the newspaper said.

China Life would establish a new company, New China Insurance Holding Corp., around Spring Festival to handle the listing process, Guan said.

But he acknowledged the insurer would seek to list overseas if the domestic securities market did not show signs of recovery.

The original goal of raising 4 billion yuan and improving corporate governance through the IPO had not changed, he said.

Nissan Teana Named Car of the Year

By Nie Zhiyang

The new Nissan Teana sedan took home the top honors at the Car of the Year 2005 awards, held by sponsors *Beijing Youth Daily*, the Sina network and *China Auto Pictorial* at the Kunlun Hotel in Beijing on Wednesday.

After over two hours of speeches from each member of the judging panel on which new car models they liked the most, Dongfeng Motor's new joint venture product, the Teana, was named Car of the Year 2005. The curvy sedan was also acknowledged for its outstanding value.

The winner in the design category was Shanghai General Motors' Cadillac CTS, while Guangzhou Honda's Fit Saloon won top prize for engineering. Huachen BMW's BMW 530i took awards for performance and drivability and Shanghai Volkswagen's Touran was called car of the year for quality.

China Impacts US Hi-tech Sector

Washington, January 11 (AFP) – The burgeoning US trade deficit with China is beginning to impact American hi-tech industries, once believed immune to lower-wage Chinese competition, a report for a US Congress-mandated commission said.

China's exports of electronics, computers, and communications equipment, along with other products that use more highly skilled labor and advanced technologies were growing much faster than its exports of low-value, labor-intensive items, the report said.

The US-China Economic and Security Review Commission released the report Tuesday showing China also rapidly gaining advantage in more advanced industries such as autos and aerospace products.

"Everyone knew we would lose jobs in labor-intensive

industries like textiles and apparel, but we thought we could hold our own in the capital-intensive, high-tech arena," said Robert Scott of the US Economic Policy Institute, which prepared the report for the commission. "The numbers we're seeing now put the lie to that hope" he said.

Scott calculated that 1.5 million American jobs had been displaced over the 1989-2003 period as a result of the growing trade deficit with China.

The deficit is expected to have increased by over 20 percent in 2004 to more than 150 billion dollars, according to the study.

"This deficit is impacting an ever-broadening segment of US manufacturing, including advanced technology industries like semiconductors that were once thought immune to lower-wage Chinese competition," it said.

Analyst's Take:

The commission's report to Congress indicates some existing and potential negative impact on the American economy caused by China-US trade. However, the key is how and when recommendations for relevant action can be put into operation.

China's foreign trade in 2004 surged to a record \$1.15 trillion to become the world's third largest trading power behind the United States and Germany.

In order to protect domestic industry and sharpen its trade competitive edge, trade protectionism has been carried out in the US. In addition, the government has debased the value of the US dollar to lessen trade deficit, which can hardly impact China's exports to the US.

Trade relations between China and the US have gradually shifted from a complementary

to a competitive mode. Although its export volume is satisfactory, China is still not a strong nation for exports because most of the export products are replaceable. Hence, China should make efforts to improve trade structure and promote advanced sectors into a driving force for foreign trade.

Neither China nor the US can give up making use of each other's vast markets. As US production capacity can't meet its huge domestic demand, it has to import from other countries. In fact, the advantages of imports from China outweigh the disadvantages. In general, China and the US should enhance cooperation through negotiations to develop better bilateral trade and relationships

– **Zhang Yuncheng, deputy director of the Center for Globalization Studies at the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (Qiu Jiaoning)**

EU, US to Avoid Airbus-Boeing Legal Row



Noël Forgeard, president and CEO of Airbus, announces Wednesday in Paris that his company has reached agreement with Boeing to solve the dispute between the two sides.

Xinhua Photo

Brussels, Belgium, January 12 (AP) – Highlighting a more conciliatory mood since President Bush was re-elected, the United States and the European Union agreed Tuesday to try to amicably settle the decades-

old trade dispute over billions of dollars in subsidies to aircraft makers Airbus and Boeing.

The decision to defer pursuing complaints with the World Trade Organization while the governments negotiate a settlement was in sharp contrast to the campaign rhetoric in October, when Bush challenged the 25-nation EU before the world trade body and the EU threatened to retaliate.

"We need open warfare on this issue like we need a hole in the head," said EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson.

"For the first time in this long-standing dispute, the US and the EU have agreed that the goal should be to end subsidies," US Trade Representative Robert Zoellick said.

After deep rifts caused by disagreements over the war in Iraq, Bush has indicated he wants to mend fences with Europe and will visit the EU head office in Brussels on February 22.

Argentina Tries to Coax Investors on Debt

Buenos Aires, Argentina, January 12 (AP) – Three years after declaring the biggest default by a sovereign nation, Argentina launched a marketing blitz Wednesday urging investors worldwide to accept new terms for restructuring more than \$100 billion in debt.

Argentina's government has proposed to pay as little as 25 cents on every dollar borrowed.

Opening a campaign aimed at winning over bondholders, Economy Minister Roberto Lavagna was expected to detail the country's final offer that is to be rolled out to investors worldwide on Friday.

The restructuring - consid-

ered the most complex and largest of its kind - will see Argentina issue between \$38.5 and \$41.8 billion in new restructured debt with lower interest rates and longer maturities.

But the proposed deal has met resistance by some foreign bondholders angry over the deep losses they are being asked to assume.

The debt swap is being closely watched on Wall Street and in Europe as a potential case study of how emerging markets hit by financial turmoil grapple with creditors and how far they can go in dictating terms of repayment.

News Corp. to Buy Rest of Fox

New York, January 11 (Reuters) – Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. on Monday said it would take full control of its Fox Entertainment Group Inc. unit in a stock swap worth about \$6 billion, which it said would simplify the media conglomerate's structure.

The deal, which sent Fox shares up 10 percent, gives News Corp. full ownership of its US entertainment assets such as 20th Century Fox film studios, Fox Network, Fox News Channel and its stake in satellite broadcaster DirecTV, which

could make it easier for Murdoch to pursue acquisitions.

The company originally sold an 18.6 percent stake in Fox Entertainment in an initial public offering in late 1998 as a way for US institutional shareholders forbidden from buying shares of a foreign company to invest in a US-based, News Corp.-controlled property.

With the reincorporation of News Corp. in the United States late last year, it made little sense to maintain two publicly traded US entities, executives told analysts in a morning conference.

Paris Club Freezes Debt Payments

Paris, January 12 (AFP) – The Paris Club of creditor nations offered an unconditional freeze on debt repayments for Indonesia, the Seychelles and Sri Lanka to help them recover from last month's catastrophic tidal waves.

"It is an offer by the Paris Club that has not yet been formally accepted by the countries concerned: Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and the Seychelles," club president Jean-Pierre Joyuet stressed at a press conference here.

"This decision is an exceptional measure. It is justified by the scale of the catastrophe.

The death toll from the

earthquake and tsunamis that devastated Indian Ocean coastlines on December 26 has topped 159,000, while as many as five million people were thought to be homeless or without food and clean water.

"In this exceptional situation, creditors wished that the suspension not be submitted to any conditions, neither an accord with the IMF (International Monetary Fund), nor to comparable treatment by private creditors," he added.

Such conditions typically accompany aid by the 19-member Paris Club, an informal cluster of some of the world's richest creditor nations.

Microsoft CFO Connors Quits

Seattle, January 12 (Reuters) – Microsoft Corp.'s Chief Financial Officer John Connors said on Tuesday he would leave the world's largest software maker after 16 years to become a partner at a Seattle-area venture capital firm.

Redmond, Washington-based Microsoft did not name a successor to Connors, 45, who in the past few years guided Microsoft to its first-ever dividend, ended employee stock options and orchestrated the biggest-ever cash payout by a US company.

"It's a very good time (to leave)," Connors told Reuters, adding that recent changes to Microsoft's financial structure and a strong group of internal

candidates would help smooth the transition for his successor.

"It's really hard to know (the impact on Microsoft) until you know who the replacement is," said Charles Di Bona, AN analyst at Sanford C. Bernstein & Co.

Connors will be joining Ignition Partners LLC, a venture capital firm based in Bellevue, Washington, located between Seattle and Microsoft's Redmond headquarters.

One possible replacement for Connors is Microsoft's corporate controller Scott Di Valerio, who came from the same position at Walt Disney Co. to help implement Microsoft's new financial structure.

India Calls for Asian Oil Market

New Delhi, January 6 (AFP) – India, which imports most of its crude oil needs, has called for the development of an Asian petroleum market with trading exchanges to serve the region's fast-growing economies and to soften price volatility.

"It's essential we develop a sophisticated Asian market for petroleum and petroleum products to ensure supply stability and reduce price volatility," India's Oil Minister Mani Shankar Aiyar told a regional energy conference on Thursday.

India hosted the one-day meeting in the Indian capital to promote supply security through regional linkages.

Booming economic growth has turned Asia into one of the main buyers of Gulf oil but a lack of partnerships between producers and consumers has made Asian nations vulnerable to global oil price volatility, participants said.

Aiyar also urged setting up strategic storages and mutual investments to promote supply security.

"Asian countries, especially rapidly-growing economies of the region, need long-term energy supply security. Oil producing countries are concerned about demand security. This is where Asian interdependence may best serve the interests of all parties," Iran's Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanghaneh said.

Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest crude exporter, said it was committed to keeping spare capacity to meet the needs of Asia's fast-growing economies, calling the region the country's "number one customer."

Analyst's Take:

The conference can be regarded as a meet-and-greet event for stepping up regional

cooperation between consumers and producers in energy fields.

Asia plays a significant role in world oil consumption. Asian countries consume 40 percent of the global oil production of 82 million barrels a day with the percentage likely to rise over the next two decades. In view of the surge in international oil prices, Asian countries urgently need to promote energy security and diplomacy in order to ensure sustainable, stable development of their domestic economies.

India, for instance, has a vital interest in stable oil markets as it sources 70 percent of its crude oil needs from abroad. India consumes 100 million tons of oil annually at present, and its annual oil demand grows at a rate of fifteen percent.

Middle Eastern producers account for some 26 percent of global oil production, a figure expected to jump to 31 percent by 2025. Although the US is still the main buyer of Gulf oil, Saudi Arabia has started shifting its focus to Asian countries, especially China and India. During the second half of 2004, Saudi Arabia produced 9.5 million barrels of crude oil every day, out of which, 4.5 million barrels were exported to Asian countries, accounting for 60 percent of its total oil exports.

It is of great importance to establish a strategic alliance between Asian oil-consuming countries and gulf oil-producing countries. An oil product chain with reciprocal investments by consumers and producers could promote the trust needed for long-term agreements with transparent and friendly pricing.

– **Ma Jiali, research professor of the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (Qiu Jiaoning)**

Deep Impact



The Delta 2 rocket took off from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station as planned at 1:47 p.m. EST with a spacecraft – named Deep Impact – the size of a small car tucked inside its nose cap. The probe was put on a path to smash a hole in Comet Tempel 1 on July 4 more than 82 million miles from Earth to discover more about the structure of comets.

Xinhua Photo

Ottawa Seeks Chinese Investors

Ottawa, January 7 (The Globe and Mail) – Eager to promote Chinese investment, the government of Canada is preparing to forge a wide-ranging pact with Beijing that will lay the foundations for investment in the energy sector and other key areas of the Canadian economy.

Ottawa quietly began negotiating a foreign investor promotion and protection agreement with China during talks in Beijing this fall. Such an agreement would take trade relations to a new level because it would safeguard the rights of investors in each of the countries, giving them the legal standing as domestic businesses.

It is part of a push by Prime Minister Paul Martin to increase

Canada's share of direct foreign investment.

And the agreement comes as talks between Chinese and Canadian energy firms gain momentum, with Husky Energy Inc. being eyed by one state oil company, and pipeline operator Enbridge Inc. aiming to ink a deal shortly that could give a Chinese company a 49 percent ownership stake in a pipeline designed to carry crude from Alberta's oil sands to British Columbia – and across the Pacific.

The Martin government's focus on China is part of its campaign to expand trade beyond the United States amid concerns that a string of recent free-trade deals signed by Washington is diluting Canada's special access to the US

market. Mr. Martin leaves for Asia next week on a marathon trade mission to China, Japan and India. According to *The Wall Street Journal*, China and Canada are close to signing an accord on investment in Canadian oil resources, which could be signed some time this month.

Analyst's Take:

Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin, together with a trade mission led by Canadian International Trade Minister Jim Peterson, will visit China this month. The visit will push the economic cooperation between China and Canada to a new stage.

On the one hand, China's huge market and abundant labor resources are of great interest

to Canada. On the other hand, Canada is rich in mineral resources and energy reserves and it possesses many technologies and much experience in high-tech industry, from which China will benefit a lot.

Considering the structure of the Canadian trade mission, the important parts of the cooperation fields are expected to cover space technology, biological science, agricultural products, financial services, information industry, natural resources, education and tourism. The two governments are going to further enhance trade relations in many fields, especially science technology and energy resources.

– **Wang Honggang, analyst of the Institute of American Studies at the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (Qiu Jiaoning)**

Tough Year for Local Job Hunters

By Zhou Ying

Nearly 284,500 people in Beijing will not find jobs this year, 14,500 more than last year, the employment department of the Beijing Municipal Labor and Social Security Bureau predicted at a news briefing held on Monday.

Bureau Director Meng Xian-cang said of the 779,000 people

seeking jobs in the capital this year, 479,000 would be from the city, 100,000 from nearby rural areas and the rest from other provinces of China.

"But compared with the large number of job hunters, there will be only 493,000 vacancies available here in Beijing," Meng told *Beijing Daily* on Monday.

"Many job seekers' skills, knowledge and ideas about choosing work are very different than the real demands of the job market. That is the main cause of unemployment," he said.

To handle the rising unemployment problem, the Beijing government planned to open more jobs related to municipal, traffic and

community administration, Meng added.

By the end of this year, the Beijing government will close the books on 11 policies, including micro-credit and tax breaks, set in 2003 for helping the unemployed.

The Labor and Social Security Bureau revealed that its employment department was carrying out a series of activities between January 1 and February 9, the first day of Spring Festival, to address the needs of the unemployed.

"We will develop 4,000 job vacancies, provide 3,000 training opportunities for those who need further education and support 2,000 projects for people who want to start their own businesses," Meng was quoted as saying by the *Beijing Daily Messenger*.

Learning from Disaster

By Liu Zhaoxi

Graphic photos of the recent tsunamis that devastated countries in South and Southeast Asia and a table showing the death tolls in affected countries are among the striking displays at the Indian Ocean Tsunami exhibition that opened on Tuesday at the China Geology Museum.

The exhibition also provides information on earthquakes and tsunamis, including geological causes of such disasters, places at high risk and tips on what to do when natural disasters occur.

Chen Yong, an academican at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, told visitors at the show's opening ceremony that China's coastal areas were not very susceptible to tsunamis because there were few fault zones off China's shores and therefore little chance of earthquakes and subsequent killer waves, *Beijing Youth Daily* reported on Wednesday.

Earthquake measuring networks had been set up at both the national and local levels across China and a tsunami warning system made up of monitoring stations installed on islands and coastal areas had been established, the newspaper said.

The Indian Ocean Tsunami exhibition runs through January 31.



Photo by Cheng Ming

Chicken Burgers for Rooster Year

By Dong Nan

McDonald's on Thursday launched its new "prosperity burgers" to celebrate the coming Spring Festival.

The special pepper-flavored chicken and beef burgers and new twisty fries will be available at around 2,200 restaurants in China, South Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore through February 22.

"McDonald's attaches great importance to the traditional Chinese Spring Festival and wishes to celebrate the New Year with consumers across Asia," Shi Wen-zhe, president of McDonald's Beijing branch company said at a press conference yesterday.

It is the first time McDonald's has included the Chinese mainland in one of its pan-East Asia promotions.



Local kids got dressed up for a pre-Spring Festival funfest at the McDonald's on Wangfujing yesterday.

Photo by Liu Xingliang



The Tiantianhao drugstore sold out of some medicines in mere hours after opening last Saturday.

Photo by Jiating

Consumers Gobble Up Cheap Drugs

By Lu Xiaonan

The Tiantianhao drugstore, the largest discount pharmacy in Beijing, attracted far more customers than expected when it opened last Saturday.

Products flew off the shelves faster than staff could replace them that first day, and while sales have slowed some, the store was still full of customers on Wednesday.

"We sold out our stocks of over 100 kinds of medicines in half a day on Saturday. We're waiting to get in fresh supplies," a salesperson at the drugstore in Xuanwu District told *Beijing Youth Daily* on Monday.

Over last weekend, the Tiantian-

hao drugstore ran a promotion allowing people to exchange expired medications for new ones at half price on top of its regular prices, far below average in the capital.

"This is a good thing for common people," one customer told *Beijing Today* as he looked for medicine for his grandson. "We have found the prices here really are lower than at other drugstores."

Discount drugstores started appearing in Beijing three years ago, before which pharmacies and hospitals generally sold drugs at high prices for maximum profit.

"Stocks of some products we thought would be good for a

month sold out in mere hours," Xie Xiaowei, the store's executive manager told *Beijing Today* on Wednesday. "There's no way that kind of sales came just from individual consumers. We think that our competitors also bought large amounts of products."

Not everyone is enamored with the discount drug concept. Some suppliers have refused to provide products to Tiantianhao on account of the store's low mark-ups.

"We will stick with our low prices and do our best to get sold-out products back on the shelves as soon as possible, certainly before next weekend," Xie said.



Photo by Wang Zhenlong

Bringing Books to Work

By Liu Zhaoxi

A reading room at the construction site of the new Beijing TV Center near the Guomao flyover opened on Wednesday, giving the 500 workers at the project easy access to good books.

The small library is the result of joint efforts of Beijing Construction Engineering Group and Capital Library and was set up in a mere 20 days.

"Now I can read books without spending money like city citizens," an unnamed migrant worker told *Beijing Youth Daily* on Wednesday after receiving a library card.

The library cards granted by the reading room also provide access to the

Capital Library and all its branches around the city.

The shelves at the reading room are stacked with more than 1,000 books covering engineering technology, literature, history, economics and other subjects.

The titles were all recommended by Capital Library staff or purchased to meet the specific needs of migrant workers. The organizers have pledged to buy other books as requested by workers.

Beijing Construction Engineering Group told *Beijing Youth Daily* on Wednesday that it was planning to build similar reading rooms at more of its work sites.

Temple of Heaven Getting Touch Up

By Liu Zhaoxi

Repainting of the exterior of the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvest, the main structure at the Temple of Heaven, started on Sunday.

Qu Luzheng, vice-director of the Administration of the Temple of Heaven told *Beijing Today* in a previous interview that the goal of the restoration project was to recreate the appearance of the hall as it was in the Qing Dynasty.

Paint from the last time the hall was restored in the 1970s has been cracking and fading. It has to be carefully scraped off to expose the bare wood beneath before repainting can begin.

Traditional materials would be used to make up the paints and the job would involve 13 complicated steps, said Zhao Desheng, a representative of Beijing Yuanlin Gujian Gongcheng Co., which is undertaking the project.

The site is still open to tourists. The entire restoration project, which will also include replacing bricks in the yard surrounding the hall, will cost more than 20 million yuan and should be finished in 2006.

Photo by Wang Xiaoxi



National English Test Leaked

By Dong Nan

Important elements of the annual national College English Tests (CET-4 and CET-6), exams required for most domestic university students to get their degrees, appeared on the Internet before the actual tests were held on Saturday.

Examiners discovered parts of the secret tests posted on Mop, a large scale online forum (www.mopsite.com), last Friday. Among the leaks were the composition topics - "write an announcement as a candidate running for president of the student union" on the CET-4 and "write a letter demanding aid to a sick and impoverished student who needs help" for the CET-6 - and 70 multiple choice questions and their answers from the CET-6, all of which appeared exactly the same way in the next day's tests.

It was not the first time that secrets from the English tests were divulged before pencils hit paper. Leaks of parts of the CET-4 test were reported several times around China in 2003 and 2004, but this was the first time for information about the harder CET-6 test to be disclosed ahead of time.

Police and officials from the Ministry of Education have launched an investigation into the case. One exam official told CCTV

that he suspected the leaks could have been perpetrated by college teachers, as they received the tests a day before they were given to students.

Chinese media have also reported that "hired guns," meaning people paid to take tests in place of others, plagued both English exams in nationwide, including Beijing. A spokesman for the Haidian District public security department said that one college in the district, which he did not name, had found five replacement test takers who used forged identification cards to get into the CET-4 exam.

The CET-4 and CET-6 tests began in 1987 and have become increasingly important, as employers often use the results to judge job candidates' English proficiency. Many colleges and universities stipulate that students who fail to pass the CET-4 cannot get their bachelor's degrees no matter how well they perform in other subjects, leading some desperate students to cheat.

In recent years, many students, professors and experts have criticized the direct relation between the national English tests and degrees and some have suggested the CET-4 and CET-6 be abandoned.

Police Poll Marred by Voting Fraud

By Wang Fang

A simple online poll to find the 10 best policemen in Tieling, Liaoning Province run at the end of December 2004 was taken so seriously by some candidates that they bought votes, the local *Shidai Shangbao* newspaper said on Monday.

The vote was organized by six departments of the Tieling government and four local media groups and started on December 17, 2004. Twenty-five candidates were posted on the Tieling public security bureau's website, as well as instructions telling voters to choose their 10 favorite officers. The poll was scheduled to run 14 days.

But on January 3, *Shidai Shangbao* was informed that candidates had meddled with the election by paying teenagers hanging out in Internet cafés to cast multiple votes.

One young voter, a 17-year-old teenager surnamed Wen, told the newspaper that he spent six days in one café with several other people his age. "We

worked in two shifts. The boss told me to click one candidate's name each time I voted," Wen said.

"It was fun. We got to play online games when we weren't voting and got free Cokes."

One policeman who failed to make the top 10 told the newspaper on condition of anonymity, "I heard that candidates were hiring people to vote for them too late. If I had known about it earlier, I would have done the same thing."

Wang Zhanlin, a spokesman for the Tieling police, told *Shidai Shangbao* that the online votes only accounted for 25 percent of the final tallies and noted that multiple votes were allowed to be cast from one IP address. "If we didn't do that, in offices where there is one computer, only one person would be allowed to vote," he explained.

"We plan on punishing the cheaters seriously," Wang said.

The list of Tieling's 10 top cops has not been released.

Flying Drug Traffickers Grounded

By Zhou Ying

China's first case of drug trafficking on a commercial flight went before the Second Intermediate People's Court of Beijing on Tuesday morning.

Main suspect Xu Guoying, 31, stood accused of transporting almost 2.6 kilograms of illegal drugs on a commercial plane in collusion with Yang Xu, 35, an employee with China Southern Airlines' Shenzhen branch.

The prosecutor said that on June 3 last year, Xu along with another suspect, Wu Longqiang, handed a paper bag containing the drugs to Yang, who was working at Shenzhen's Baoan international airport. Yang helped them evade normal airport security checks and gave the bag back to Xu, who was then able to carry the drugs onto a plane without being noticed.

Xu confessed to the crime before the court, *Beijing Youth Daily* reported Wednes-

day. She claimed to meeting Yang in 2003 and subsequently calling on her to help dodge airport inspections several times.

"I met Wu Longqiang years ago. He told me that we could traffic drugs by plane safely with Yang's help. I talked the plan over with Yang and she agreed," Xu was quoted as telling the court.

The three suspects were arrested while walking out of Beijing Capital International Airport. Police caught them in possession of 2.2 kilograms of ice, 195 grams of ecstasy, 137.5 grams of K powder and 70.3 grams of marijuana, *Beijing Youth Daily* said.

But Yang refuted Xu's testimony and professed innocence before the court. "I had no idea the bag contained drugs. I am a victim in this," she said.

The court said it would issue its judgment in the near future.



The bigger the golden larch trees grew, the more Yu felt anxious.

By Zhou Ying

Yu Hu and Chen Jian, two ordinary farmers from Huzhou city, Zhejiang province, face five and four and a half years respectively behind bars for destroying 15 golden larch trees, one of the trees selected for national conservation efforts, according to the judgment released by the People's Court in Anji county last Wednesday.

Speaking of the experience of destroying the trees, the 50-year-old farmer Yu Hu cried out in indignation rather than regret.

Yu owns a bamboo wood with a total area of seven to eight mu (four to five thousand square meters) in Anji county, and it is the sole source of income for his whole family. Normally, if someone discovered a rare golden larch tree growing it would be cause for celebration. But when Yu found last year that more than 20 golden larch trees were sprouting in his own bamboo woods he was not so happy. The larch grows to a considerable height and size and the trees would soon block the sunshine from Yu's bamboo, not to mention leaching out nutrients from the soil that the bamboo needed.

The bigger the golden larch trees grew, the more Yu felt anxious. "The 20 golden larch trees may destroy more than 200 of my bamboos, which are worth nearly 2,000 yuan," Yu told *Today Morning Express*, a Zhejiang based daily newspaper. "For a poor family, 2,000 yuan equals their total annual income," Yu explained.

According to the report in *Today Morning Express* last Thursday, Chen Jian, one of Yu's helpers from a neighboring county, came up with a "good idea" that could avoid cutting down the trees. "We stripped the skins off 15 trees so they would die of malnutrition," Yu said.

Although they are doing their duty and cracking down on cases involving the cutting down or destruction of rare trees, members of the Anji forest supervisory team are not particularly happy in their work right now. The more the gold-

One Man's Golden Larch...



200 bamboos are worth nearly 2,000 yuan, roughly Yu's total annual income.

en larch trees appear, and they are already abundant in Anji county, the less bamboo there is room for, and this seriously impedes the incomes of local farmers.

So a tricky question has arisen: how can the interests of the farmers be protected at the same time as rare species of trees and plants?

A villager from Anji County: the more golden larch trees in your land, the more hapless you are (from *Today Morning Express*)

Anji County is also called the county of bamboo, and it is the main source of income for most of our 300,000 residents. Although the golden larch trees spread nearly all over the mountain, they are totally worthless in our eyes.

With the fertile soil, these trees grow at a high speed, blocking the sunshine from the bamboo. The golden larch trees also contend for fertilizer with our bamboo. So the more the golden larch trees, the

less bamboo. We always say that the more golden larch trees in your land, the more hapless you are. If I were Mr. Yu, I would have dealt with the problem in the same way.

Wang Jianqiang, head of the Anji forest supervisory team: **the local government is considering increasing the amount of compensation**

The golden larch trees are rare in our country. But there are many of these trees in our county. The case of Yu is not that strange because nearly every farmer has to face these problems. We never conduct an investigation into the specific number of the trees, but as far as I know, there is usually at least one golden larch tree per mu.

Nearly every resident here cultivates bamboos for a living, and if they do a good job they can make a profit of as much as a thousand yuan per mu. So these larch trees

are causing the farmers considerable financial losses.

However, the local government tries to compensate all the farmers who have five golden larch trees per mu. I know that the small amount of money on offer is far from enough, but the government does not have enough money to pay people what they want.

The *Today Morning Express* report has drawn attention from both the public and the related departments. Now the local government, together with Anji Forestry Department, is considering increasing the amount of compensation.

The local forestry department has also decided to conduct a general investigation, counting the exact number of the trees in order to conduct better supervision.

Luo Chunju, a professor of bioecology from Beijing Forestry University: **there should be a way to keep a balance between national interests and public interests**

In my opinion, it is not that difficult to solve this problem. There are two obvious methods.

Firstly, if there is a large number of golden larch trees in the land, the local government could choose either to buy the land from the farmer or give him another piece of land in exchange. In that way the county could form some protected areas that would be much easier to supervise.

On the other hand, if there are not too many trees on the land, the government could order the farmers to protect the trees while

offering a certain amount of compensation for their loss. As for the younger trees, they can be transplanted to protection areas.

The local government should take the responsibility to develop people's consciousness about protection of rare plants. It is not enough to punish people. The people should be protected as well as the plants.

During the fifth World Conservation Conference in 2003, all the participants reached an agreement that the supervision of natural protective areas should not be isolated from the local people. We cannot protect the plants at the cost of civilian production there. The two sides should supplement each other rather than colliding with each other.

Finally I should mention that the local government should guide the residents there to find some other way of making a living. They should have more than just one way of making money.

Qiu Xuan, assistant lawyer from Zhongzi Law Office: **the punishment fits the crime**



The revised version of the Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China released in 1997 announces that whoever, in violation of this law, causes damage to natural resources like land, forests, grasslands and wild plants shall be investigated for criminal responsibility.

According to this article, we can see that if someone damages rare plants, he or she should bear criminal responsibility, not just administrative punishment.

I think the local citizens should enhance their consciousness of the law. They should not damage the trees no matter how dissatisfied they are with the amount of compensation from the local government.

Zhai Chunyang, a Zhejiang writer for the *Beijing News*: **the interests of the country are not boundless**

It is reasonable that the law should prohibit damaging rare plants, no matter where they grow. However, if the rare plants live on private land, isn't it quite obvious that they should belong to the owner of that land?

Therefore the government must pay enough compensation to protect those plants. At least they should compensate the losses of the farmers. But the current compensation is only five yuan per mu and that is far from enough, so the farmers have no choice but to take risks. I believe that if the authorities do not change their policies, the case of Yu will not be the last one.

Soundbites

"We extend our hands to our neighbors. We are ready for peace, peace based on justice. We hope that their response will be positive." **Mahmoud Abbas** declared late Monday after a meeting with international observers who monitored the Palestinian election. Abbas, fresh from a landslide victory in an election to replace Yasser Arafat as head of the Palestinian Authority, offered peace talks to Israel on Monday just as prime minister Sharon was installing a new, dovish government that favors withdrawing from Gaza and part of the West Bank.

"Don't cheerleaders all over America form pyramids six to eight times a year. Is that torture?" attorney **Guy Womack** said in opening arguments to the 10-member US military jury at the court-martial of Charles Graner, accused ringleader in the Iraq prisoner abuse scandal. Womack on Monday compared piling naked prisoners into pyramids to cheerleader shows and said leashing inmates was also acceptable prisoner control, a practice he compared to parents putting tethers on toddlers.

"In the end we'll get used to not smoking in restaurants or bars, just like we've already had to do, for example, in trains and planes," said **Francesca Cola**, a 38-year-old clothing store owner, smoking a cigarette as she sat outside a cafe on Rome's central Piazza Venezia. Italy began the enforcement of a tough law which bans smoking on public transport and in hospitals, cinemas and schools at 12:01 Monday. The law, described as one of the toughest in Europe, will fine smokers from 27.50 euros (US\$36) to 275 euros (US\$363) if caught lighting up where they shouldn't. Owners of premises that close an eye to smoking face stiffer fines, as high as 2,200 euros (US\$2,904).

"It's the biggest story since Jennifer Lopez and Ben Affleck broke up," US Weekly Editor in Chief **Janice Min** said Tuesday, commenting on the split of Hollywood glamour couple Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston, who said in a joint statement last Friday that they would "formally separate". In the world of celebrities and those who love them, the Jennifer Aniston-Brad Pitt breakup was like the fall of the Berlin Wall.

"The biggest surprise in this find is mammals eating dinosaurs," said **Meng Jin**, associate curator in the Division of Paleontology at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, after unveiling the fossil of a mammal, found in Northeast China, with a baby dinosaur in its stomach Wednesday. They showed off a 130-million-year-old fossil that casts mammals in a new light by proving that in prehistoric times they fed on young dinosaurs.

"There's no age to him. He's just Elvis," said **Jerry Engelby**, one of about 800 fans who gathered on Grace-land's front lawn for a cake cutting and "Happy Birthday" sing-along. If he were still alive, Elvis Presley would have turned 70 on Saturday. That he was born in 1935 and died in 1977 did little to tarnish the fans' memories of a rock'n'roll rebel or bespangled superstar.

(Edited by: Lene Chau and Lu Xiaonan)

By Shang Jing

It has been reported that Beijing is to remove the limitation stating that only people with a Beijing hukou (residence permit) can buy cars. In future, non-locals will also be able to purchase automobiles in Beijing.

It should be good news for non-locals who want to buy a car. Now they do not have to buy cars using the name of some other Beijing local or company.

But we can't be certain about how many non-locals will be excited at this news or how effective the policy will be for the market. Those who want to buy autos probably have already done so, by whatever means, and others probably won't buy a car no matter what the incentives offered.

The real intention in removing the hukou limitation on car buyers, according to some sources, is to "help the auto market" rather than to offer convenience to non-local buyers or show the openness of the government. The limitation might still be there if

the auto market was booming as it was two years ago.

Examples of lifting hukou limitations for the sake of market development are actually not rare in the recent past, for instance the lifting of restrictions on home buying when the housing market was depressed. It seems non-locals will not have access to all the usual resources and services until they are abundant in the market. For example, migrant workers used to be required to use "employees' cards" until the floating population was brought under greater control.

Migrant workers construct and contribute to our city. The taxes they have paid go into the government's public finances. Therefore, the migrant workers should be treated fairly and equally with the locals.

The policy makers should always bear in mind the notion of humanity. The government should not make decisions according to changes in the market or randomly offer people new rights based on market

Commentary

When Will All Hukou Restrictions be Lifted?



City's Rapid Growth Matched by RISING SOCIAL PROBLEMS



In 2003, migrants made up 4.095 million of Beijing's population. Most migrants end up receiving limited education and only finding low-paying, physical labor jobs.

By Dong Nan

The Beijing Statistics Bureau released its first social development statistics indexes for 2004 and a related report on January 5.

The indexes cover the seven subjects of living quality, social structure, economic growth, population quality, environment, social stability and social security, and each section is based on related statistics tallied between the years 2000 and 2003.

The general index, combining all seven factors, was set at 100 points for 2000 and increased to 123.7 points in 2003, indicating the improvement of society.

The idea behind the indexes is to identify trends in Beijing's social development. The bureau's report points out that Beijing is in a period of stable development in terms of living quality, social structure, economic growth, population and the environment, but faces serious problems of social security and stability.

Rapid growth

The living quality index showed the fastest growth, rising from 20.46 points in 2000 to 29.55 points in 2003. An important factor behind that number is people paying more for cultural consumption – the average among Beijing citizens jumped from 1,283.9 yuan in 2000 to 1,946.2 yuan in 2003, with 15.2% annual growth. Average incomes and expenditures for material consumption have also increased.

However, living area is not keeping pace. The average housing area per person in the capital was 18.7 square meters in 2003, up slightly from 16.8 square meters in 2000. That increase was not fast enough to keep up with rapidly improving living standards, the report said.

The index of social structure rose to 16.9 points in 2003 from 13.4 points three years before. In 2003, companies' research and development expenses accounted for 7% of Beijing's total GDP, suggesting science and technology are playing important roles in the city's economic growth, the report said. Between 2000 and 2003, tertiary industry, meaning anything outside of agriculture and manufacturing, made up more than 60% of the GDP, a good sign for Beijing's industrial structure.

Growth in the economic, population and environment indexes mirrored other improvements in city residents' lives. The average life span in Beijing is an impressive

79.6 years, Beijingers receive an average of 10 years of education 52% of local high school students enter college – all three figures are tops across China.

Widening income gap

The biggest challenges still facing Beijing lie in social stability, especially in terms of the rapidly expanding income gap between the rich and poor.

"A reasonable income gap can improve economic efficiency, but if the gap is too large, it can be a threat to social stability. The gap in Beijing has consistently gotten wider," the report says.

In 2003, the poorest 10% of Beijing's families had average net incomes of 6,174 yuan a year, while the richest 10% earned a total of 29,009 yuan a year. That meant the rich made 4.7 times the income of the poor, a significant increase from 3.1 times in 2000.

The discrepancy between rural and urban residents' incomes has also grown. In 2003, the average net income among urban families was 13,882.6 yuan, compared to 6,496.3 yuan among rural families. That means a total gap of 7,386 yuan, a tremendous leap from the mere 141 yuan recorded in 1978. Rural residents' net incomes in 2003 were 389 yuan behind those of urban people in 1996, indicating a lag equivalent to at least eight years between the two.

Incomes also vary greatly according to profession and industry. In 2003, people working in the agriculture, forestry and aquaculture industries in Beijing had the lowest average annual wages of 14,981 yuan, a quarter of the 61,713 yuan earned on average by people in the financial field, the city's top earners.

Not only are gaps widening, the ranks of the poor are growing. The report points out that in 2003, around 60% of Beijing's population earned below-average incomes. The figure broke down to 56.8% in urban areas and 63.4% in rural areas. Bringing more people above that average income line is an urgent task, the report concludes.

Age issue

The rapid aging of Beijing's pop-

ulation represents another real risk to the stability of the city. In 2000, 10.5% of the local populace was senior citizens who needed support and that number climbed to 14.3% in 2003.

From 1990 to 2000, the number of people in Beijing above 60 years old grew an average 4.4% every year. People over 65 years of age accounted for 7.8% of the city's population, surpassing the 7% international standard of an "aged society." And the number has continued to climb, reaching 9.7% in 2003.

Beijing's economic growth, however, has lagged behind the aging of its population. "In developed countries, the economy developed first and then the age problem arose. But in China, things have gone the other way around," the report points out. In developed countries where people over 65 years old make up more than 7% of the population, per capita GDP is over \$5,000, compared to \$3,874 in Beijing. That spells a heavy economic burden on this city and its society.

Beijing is not well prepared for the drastic change already underway in its population structure and does not have a good system for providing senior citizens with social insurance and other services, the report says. And not enough attention is being paid to specific problems within the aging issue, such as women making up the majority of senior citizens and older people having limited influence on consumption patterns.

Migrants exploited

In 2003, migrants made up 4.095 million of Beijing's population. Among them, 3.076 million, or 21% of all people in the city, had lived in Beijing for more than half a year. Despite their numbers, migrants generally received little education and earned low incomes, mostly from physical work. That forces them to live on the outskirts of the city and leads to feelings of deprivation that represent real threats to social stability, the report says.

In 2003, 84.9% of migrants older than six had not completed their nine years of compulsory education. The number in Beijing's permanent population was 54.3%.

The same year, the average monthly income among migrants was 1,050 yuan, 1,059 yuan less than that of permanent residents. Every week, migrants worked on average 56.9 hours, 13.4 hours more than locals. Some 86% worked in physical labor positions such as construction work or waiting tables and 90.9% lived in Beijing's suburbs.

In 2003, 179,000 children of migrants were enrolled in Beijing schools, though more than 20% were in temporary schools set up just for non-local kids where teaching and facilities were generally poor. Migrant families paid on average 3,193 yuan every year, or 15.5% of their total incomes, to send their children to school, twice the 7.7% average among permanent residents.

Policing problems

The report also showed that Beijing was not as safe as it used to be and faced serious security challenges.

Of the 71,000 crimes committed in Beijing in 2003, only 36,000, or 51.4%, were solved, down from 58.4% in 2002. And 1,641 people died in traffic accidents, 142 more than in 2002.

The outbreaks of SARS in 2003 and bird flu in 2004 exposed serious problems in the city's public sanitation and health care systems. In 2003, there were 5.9 hospital beds for every 1,000 people in urban areas and only four beds per 1,000 people in rural areas. There were 4.2 doctors per 1,000 people inside the city and 2.5 in rural areas. About 2.35 million people, or 16% of the population, underwent health examinations in 2003, and 46% of all hospital patients that year were cured.

As Beijing continues to grow, employment could become a severe problem. Some 779,000 people are expected to be looking for jobs in 2005, though only 493,000 positions should be available.

Though inadequacies in the social welfare system appear throughout Beijing, problems are worst in rural areas, where few senior citizens receive retirement pensions and medical expenses are beyond the financial abilities of many people. Many migrant workers are also excluded from the social insurance system, meaning they struggle when they need medical care and rarely receive compensation for workplace injuries.

Survey information:

The report was compiled by the Beijing Statistics Bureau based on data from 2000 to 2003.



China's fastest growing city offers many opportunities.

Shanghai Singled Out as Top Place to Work

By Dong Nan

Which Chinese city is your favorite, and in which city would you prefer to work and why? Shanghai came out on top in a survey that posed these questions to white-collar workers and university students, released by the Beijing-based magazine *Profession* and Chinese Youth Online last month.

By a reasonable margin, the cities chosen as best for working in were Shanghai (15.12%) and Beijing (14.53%). The rest of the list was filled out by Hangzhou (8.72%), Guangzhou (7.56%), Shenzhen (6.40%), Chengdu (6.40%), Dalian (4.65%), Suzhou (4.65%), Qingdao (4.07%), Wuhan (3.49%), Xi'an (3.49%) and Xiamen (3.49%).

The main draws of Hangzhou and Chengdu, enough to bump them into high standing, were their favorable climates, excellent cuisines and relatively easy-going paces of life.

But that does not indicate that young professionals in China are concerned with comfort more than advancement. In naming the main factors behind their choices, 47.67% of respondents said a city's degree of modernization, 46.51% said whether a city's economic environment could help them further their careers, 42.44% answered salary levels and 43.02% said climate.

Next most important was cultural environment, an answer chosen by 30.81% of respondents, followed by "it's where my family is" (23.25%) and the comfort and convenience of a city's lifestyle, selected by 25.58% of those surveyed.

Survey information:

The survey was done by *Profession* magazine and Chinese Youth Online among 1,000 university students (48.25%) and white-collar workers (51.75%).

What Do You Think of Chinese Cities?

Fastest Paced Cities

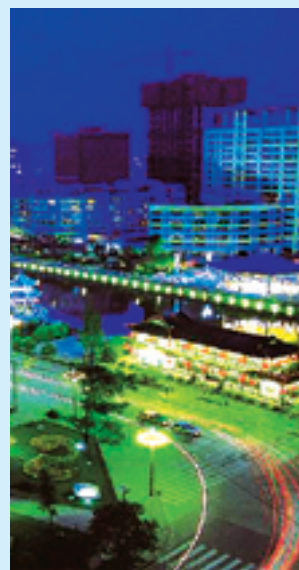
Shanghai (87.21%)
Beijing (86.05%)
Shenzhen (83.14%)
Guangzhou (81.40%)
Hangzhou (20.35%)

Hardest Cities to Live in

Lhasa (54.65%)
Xining (37.79%)
Harbin (29.65%)
Beijing (26.74%)
Xi'an (26.16%)

Cities with Highest Salaries

Beijing (53.49%)
Shanghai (50%)
Shenzhen (49.42%)
Guangzhou (45.93%)
Hangzhou (17.44%)



Chengdu was a popular choice for its pleasant climate, excellent cuisine and relatively easy-going lifestyle.

Study Shows Journalism Bad for Health

By Dong Nan

Checks of 1,182 reporters in Beijing conducted by the Chinese Physician's Association on Sunday showed that only 28, or 2.4% of them, were healthy.

Stomach problems were the most common ailments of the tested journalists, all of whom were under 60 years old.

Results of the checks point the finger for the reporters' poor health at occupational stress. Among the people examined, 84.2% said they suffered from chronic exhaustion, 72.1% complained of high work pressure, 62% said they did not get regular sleep, half had bad eyesight and nearly the same number were in chronic pain. However, over 60% of them admitted it was the first time they had undergone a full-body physical test.

The 659 female journalists checked fared poorly. More than 290 suffered breast disease and over 30% had gynecological conditions, mostly the result of high pressure, nervous tension and unbalanced living patterns. The majority of the women were unaware of their health problems before the examinations.

Liang Wannian, vice director general of the Beijing Health Bureau advised all local journalists to regularly receive health examinations and build personal "health archives." Reporters should also pay attention to their psychological health, get regular exercise, avoid foods hard to digest, minimize smoking and drinking and take vacations when they felt overwhelmed by work, Liang said.

Survey information:

The survey was conducted by the Chinese Physician Association based on health examinations of 1,182 Beijing journalists under 60-years-old.

By Liu Zhaoxi

Wang Youcai, a businessman from Zhejiang Province, stood on top of the warehouse of the Xueqinglu PriceSmart in Beijing yesterday, threatening to jump unless somebody from the store would show up and talk with him.

The store had closed down and the people who owe him a lot of money were nowhere to be found. The store has owed him 600,000 yuan for more than a year for his supplies, including Walkmans, mp3 players and telephones. The flagship store of Beijing PriceSmart, a membership shopping chain, shut down last Thursday and nobody knows exactly when it will open again.

Back in his hometown in Zhejiang, Wang has had to mortgage his property to pay bank loans and he still has big debts, he told *Beijing Today*.

He is not alone. More than 40 suppliers climbed to the top of the warehouse yesterday, an incident which

China. Nuoheng Group not only opened new PriceSmart membership stores, but also created another retail chain, the non-membership N-Mart.

Lack of funds

"2003 was the best year for us, in terms of luck," Fu Yu told *Beijing Today*. In that year, the company made profits of more than four billion, and the group decided to accelerate its expansion. "At that time, this decision was not wrong."

But in the second half of 2004, due to fears the economy was overheating, the government introduced measures to control the expansion of investment activity. Nuoheng suddenly found it could not get new bank loans, and payments on the existing ones were due. At the beginning of 2004, the company had to pay off 200 million yuan in debt, and stores across the nation were plunged into a shortage of capital, Fu Yu told *China Business* in December last year.



On the gate, a note reads: the store is under reorganization. It will re-open in the near future.

Photo by Li Shuzhuan

the N-Mart chain after its membership stores had gained solid ground in the market. Instead, the company started the new chain while the original business was still immature.

"I worked in the company for so many years and I never figured out at all whether PriceSmart wanted to make money or not," the former Kunming PriceSmart executive told *Beijing Today*. "The goal of running the busi-

Flagship Store of Beijing



brought the police and fire department to the scene, but no one from the store showed up.

"We'll never give up, and we'll keep coming back until they talk to us," said Liu Juan, one of the suppliers. She said they did this also because they did not want other retailers to imitate PriceSmart in owing and dodging suppliers.

"We want to call on the government to step in and see what can be done," Huang told *Beijing Today* on Tuesday. Huang said he has already filed a lawsuit against PriceSmart, who owe him over 100,000 yuan.

And Beijing PriceSmart is not the only store in the chain that's in trouble. In Kunming, the second city the chain expanded to after Beijing, all five stores closed their doors on Christmas Eve last year. In other cities around China, including Qingdao, Changsha, Tianjin and Chongqing, PriceSmart stores were reported closing one after another. They all got into trouble for similar reasons, pressed by suppliers whom the stores owe payments for goods.

Broken chain

PriceSmart was begun by American Sol Price and his son, Robert. They founded the Price Club in the United States in 1976, where members could take advantage of pooled buying power to obtain the best possible cost on merchandise. PriceSmart owns and operates US-style membership shopping warehouse clubs in Latin America, the Caribbean and Asia.

In 1997, this membership merchandising business was introduced to China and the first PriceSmart membership store was opened in Beijing. PriceSmart in China, however, is not funded or operated by the mother company in the US, but by a private Chinese company, Nuoheng Group, based in Beijing. The company paid PriceSmart to use the brand name and its management model, Fu Yu, Nuoheng public relations manager told *Beijing Today*.

"PriceSmart was the first membership store in China," Hong Tao, professor at Beijing Technology and Trade University, told *Beijing Today*. "It was very popular for a while."

In just a few years, PriceSmart opened more than 20 stores all over

The stores did not have enough money to pay the suppliers, who finally lost their patience. In one city after another, suppliers got together and stopped supplying, which resulted in the stores losing customers. At the same time, suppliers tried all means to press the stores to pay them.

In Kunming, Yunnan Province, more than 200 suppliers surrounded the office building of the local PriceSmart headquarters, and did not even allow the lunch delivery guy to get in, said a former executive at the headquarters, who spoke to *Beijing Today* on the condition of anonymity on Tuesday. In Changsha, Hunan Province, suppliers stormed a store and fought with the security guards, according to the local *Xiaoxiang Morning Post*. In Beijing, suppliers camped in the entrance of the flagship store, and even lived inside the store for several days. It all got a lot of press attention, but none of these means succeeded in getting the company to pay up.

Meanwhile, as PriceSmart stores closed across the country, five stores in several cities were purchased in November last year by B&Q, the British home product retailer, for more than 100 million yuan.

Expanding too fast

The problem seems to be that Nuoheng did not stop expanding its new franchise, despite the shortage of funding. "If we stop developing, we will slip into a position of inertia," Fu told *Beijing Today*. "And if we stopped funding the new stores, the money already thrown in would be in vain."

So sales income, part of which was supposed to pay the goods suppliers, was used to support the large but fragile chain. "They want to make money with the money of others. This idea is just wrong," supplier Huang said.

"Importance should be attached to the lesson that companies should not simply pursue scale, looking only at how many stores they can open within a short period of time. The risk attached to that approach is high," Hong Tao told *Beijing Today*.

Many media reports have pointed out that PriceSmart got into trouble because it expanded too fast. The former executive at the Kunming company said PriceSmart should have started

ness was not clear."

She said she did not feel the company had a clear strategy for its development. The management was in constant change, and different people had different ideas, without much analysis of feasibility. In addition, she said, the company seemed to pay more attention to its image than its profits.

When stores were in trouble, the company had the policy of supporting the flagship stores, whether they were profitable or not, with money from other stores, in order to maintain a good image. During major holidays, the company ordered the stores to stock goods with sudden large purchases. The company just wanted to create a prosperous image without considering whether the goods could be sold, or whether there was enough space in the warehouses, said the former executive. But in doing so, the stores faced more pressure to pay the suppliers, and more losses when the commodities could not be sold or were damaged during storage and transfer.

"Please give us some time"

Suppliers in Beijing told *Beijing Today* that the owners of PriceSmart China withdrew money from the chain to invest in other businesses, including real estate. Middle and small suppliers have been hurt the most. "Some of them have gone bankrupt," Liu Juan, one supplier said. "This Chinese New Year will be a hard time for many suppliers," she said.

Fu Yu told *Beijing Today* that Nuoheng Group is working hard to find a solution, including negotiating with other companies, and seeking new investment. But he said it was still too early at this point to reveal any details of the progress of these efforts.

Fu called on the suppliers to work together with the company. "Suppliers uniting to squeeze the company can only make things worse," he said. "Unreasonable actions" of the suppliers would undermine the confidence of potential investors in the company and delay negotiations, he added.

"We're trying our best to find a solution. Please give us a little more time," he said.

How long does the company need? Fu Yu said about half a year.

By Wang Fang

A fight that broke out in November 2004 has led to the exposure of a fake military school and the arrest of its headmaster in Taiyuan, capital of Shanxi Province, *Beijing News* reported.

The school was called Navigation School of the People's Liberation Army. *Beijing News* found out that since May 1999, the school had enrolled more than 600 students and collected more than 10 million yuan in tuition and fees.

Exposed

A dark green Toyota cross-country vehicle with a military license plate got stuck behind a steamroller on a road in Dangu Village, Taiyuan around 8pm on November 16, 2004.

A middle-aged man in military uniform with the rank of senior captain got out of the vehicle, and told the worker in the steamroller to get out of the way. The worker refused, saying he had to finish flattening the road first. They started to quarrel and then fought.

The man in the military uniform then ran to the nearby Navigation School of the People's Liberation Army and called more than 20 students to go to the worker's home. They broke in and smashed the worker's furniture, injuring several villagers in the process.

The police were summoned after the incident and they notified the headquarters of Shanxi garrison command.

Two hours later, a team of soldiers from Shanxi garrison command arrived at the school. A student, surnamed Li told *Beijing News* that she heard one of the soldiers say, "this is a fake military school." Shortly after, the driver of the Toyota, Zhao Wei, the headmaster of the school, was taken away by the police.

On November 20, 2004, the school was formally closed down. Three days later, Pan Baohuan, the vice secretary

school's license had been cancelled.

The surprising thing is that the school kept on running. Mr. Wang told *Beijing Today*, "Zhao claimed that his school was a military one. By law, the local government did not have the authority to supervise a military school."

A student surnamed Ma recalled to *Beijing News* that years earlier there had already been suggestions that all was not as it seemed at the school. "On June 29, 2001, a soldier from Shanxi garrison command came to the school in the morning, telling us that the school was not a military one but a motorbike manufacturing school."

A report in *Shanxi Evening Newspaper* on July 3, 2001 covered this incident. It says Shanxi garrison command and the local police acted together to close down a fake military school called Navigation School of the People's Liberation Army. Zhao was arrested by the police in the early morning on June 30, 2001.

However, Mr. Wang told *Beijing Today* that when the legal staff from the garrison command came to the police to question Zhao at 9am on June 30, 2001, they were told that Zhao "had run away".

Ten days later, Zhao came back to the school and the police mysteriously ceased their investigation. Mr. Wang told *Beijing Today* that the local procur-



The gate of the school

Photos by Li Site

Unlicensed Military School Shut Down

of Taiyuan Government announced that Zhao's school had not been approved by either the military or the government.

Establishment of the school

Mr. Wang, the man heading the government team dealing with the closure of the school, told *Beijing Today* they were still trying to work out how the school got registered. "We found an agreement signed by Zhao and a military section on May 1, 1999," he said. "When Zhao signed the agreement, the army only agreed to help him to carry out military training for his students."

Other official documents also proved that Zhao's school was never a military one. The documents used by Zhao Wei in registering the school with Shanxi Labor Department record that he used the name "Shanxi Navigation Motorbike Manufacturing Training School."

A booklet for the school found by *Beijing News* says that in 1999, the school enrolled 60 students in two motorbike manufacturing classes and one vocal music class. Students paid 7,100 yuan for tuition. The curriculum included Chinese, maths, politics, English, Japanese, vocal music and motorbike manufacturing.

At first, the school was situated in a deserted courtyard owned by an army barracks. The neighbors recalled to *Beijing News* that the students there were all in military uniform and sang military songs. "We never doubted that it was a military school," a neighbor said.

In September 2000, Zhao moved his school to Dangu Village Primary School in Jiancaoping District. Ma Haiqing, the secretary of the party committee of Dangu Village told *Beijing Today* that Zhao signed a five-year contract with the village committee, promising to pay 100,000 yuan to the village in rent every year. Later, the contract was changed to 20 years and Zhao was also entitled to use the 2,668 square meter area around the primary school.

Close friendship with government officials

In the school booklet, Zhao claims to have a close relationship with a top leader in Beijing. His students also told *Beijing News* that officials from Taiyuan government were his friends.

They showed a picture to *Beijing News* of a school performance on August 1, 2004, to which a number of officials turned up, including people from Taiyuan People's Congress, Taiyuan Discipline Inspection Commission, Taiyuan Police Bureau and Shanxi Supreme People's Court.

Mr. Wang told *Beijing News*, "These officials are all retired and they went there to represent only themselves." But *Beijing News* found that most of them are still working for their various institutions.

Escape from punishment

At the end of 2000, the license of Zhao's school was cancelled by Taiyuan Labor Department. When *Beijing Today* called the department on Wednesday, they refused to comment on why the



Zhao Wei (right)

ratorate was looking into the reasons for this.

The true identity of Zhao Wei and his school

Mr. Wang told *Beijing Today* that the arrest in 2001 made Zhao Wei a suspect at large with a police record. His real name was Li Changsheng, from Shunyi District, Beijing.

The school's accounts only had 6.7 yuan left when the team closed down the school last November. The police also found guns and bullets in Zhao's office, *Beijing News* reported.

Zhao's daughter gave herself up to the police a week after her father's detention and handed in 800,000 yuan. She said it was part of the tuition fees the students had paid.

A former student surnamed Li told *Beijing News* that when she was enrolled in 2001, Zhao said the school would arrange for her to work in a military factory in Beijing after graduation. However, when she went to Beijing in July 2004, she found she had not been sent to a military factory, but a motorbike shop. As an apprentice, her salary was dependent on how many motorbikes she sold. "I couldn't make any money so I returned home one month later," she said.

Latest developments

Mr. Wang told *Beijing Today*, "Taiyuan government has offered places in 60 polytechnic schools, technical secondary schools and vocational training schools to Zhao's 300 students. The government will also return their tuition fees after an assessment has been carried out."

However, some students and their parents told *Beijing News* that they wished to go to a school which could offer them a certificate of a university or college degree, as Zhao's school once promised them.

Some of these students and parents stayed in the school after it had been closed down, even though the electricity and heating had been cut off. They are waiting for a final decision from the local government.

By Hester Xu and Yan Zhang

Although his father and mother are both well-known writers, Xiaolei has not inherited their bookishness, preferring sport and the outdoors life. He is well-built and there's an air of roughness underneath the easy-going manner. "I like wearing simple clothes, which are comfortable and give people the feeling you're a worker." He speaks with such an ease and calm that you could hardly tell there's a lawsuit hanging over his head.

A cattle man's life in Xinjiang

In 1983, when Xiaolei was studying German literature at Beijing University, he visited Xinjiang Province with his mother, who was collecting folk arts. He suddenly realised, as a young man desperately seeking a place to let off some steam, he had found the ideal place.

Returning to Beijing, Xiaolei left Rilke behind and decided to attend farm economy class instead at Beijing Agriculture University. He also loved sports very much at that time and wasn't sure which career path to follow. When he graduated

after they had become too old to plough the land, so people could only get fresh meat after a cow was near death anyway. But Xiaolei wanted to supply Chinese people with cattle slaughtered properly and fed scientifically.

According to his own design, Xiaolei built a large house with a fireplace, a bathroom, several bedrooms and a small porch in front of the door. The day he sowed the seeds, there was a rainfall which seemed to offer hope for the birth of the first ecological ranch in China. But in less than half a year, all his friends left. "It wasn't only the hardship," Xiaolei admitted, "although they were not used to the living environment, challenging geographical conditions and climate. Mostly it was because they couldn't mix with the local people and felt very lonely. That's what they really couldn't stand."

But Xiaolei managed to stay on and successfully merge into the local life and culture. The people there impressed him with their simplicity and frankness. He talked with them about the weather, the harvest

halt half way through. He lost five million yuan and realized it would no longer be possible to run his ranch. Xiaolei had to mortgage it to pay the debt. With all his hopes gone, he packed his bags and headed back to Beijing on a hard seat train. He had only 5 yuan in his pocket when he arrived.

Xiaolei went through a serious spiritual crisis upon his return to Beijing and fell into a pattern of heavy drinking. He would sleep wherever he got drunk, whether by the roadside or spending the night at a friend's home. With no job or any real goal, he lived this life for two whole years. But he could always remember worse times.

Harsh childhood

Xiaolei's yearning for Xinjiang had left a deep mark in his heart. He says that both his parents are strong-minded and he inevitably carries the same strain of personality. But the hardship he endured in Xinjiang is nothing compared to what he had suffered during his childhood. Most people think he was lucky to have such cultured parents. But instead of gaining

On the north slope of Tianshan Mountain is a small town called Wujiagu. He Xiaolei, a native-born Beijinger, spent most of his youth in this land chasing his dream of scientific cultivation and farming, but found that while some dreams may begin to seem impossible, others can be fulfilled.

The Urbane Urban Herdsman

in 1984, the National Ministry of Post and Telecommunications offered him a job, promising to send him to Siemens in Germany for an extended visit and work after he finished one year's internship. However, Xiaolei declined this offer and opted to work as a journalist for *China Sports News*.

By the end of 1985, Xiaolei had grown restless so he quit his job as a journalist and went to Xinjiang with five students from the Agriculture University, settling in Wujiagu, a small town on the north slope of Tianshan Mountain. If it hadn't been for his mother's objection, he would have transferred his *Hukou* (residence permit) there from Beijing as well.

On a 20,000 *mu* (about 13,340,000 sqm) desert area in front of Qinggeda Lake, facing the 4,300 metre-high Bogeda Peak in the distance, Xiaolei and his friends began to make their dream a reality. They called the place Xiwu, which means "sheer wood". They found the land had been seriously spoiled by short sighted local cultivation practices.

"I put a Coke can at the place where the first pole was to be driven in to the ground to symbolise our dream to turn a wasteland into an international-standard ranch," said Xiaolei. He and his friends hoped to build on the practice of Japanese and European farmers in creating their ranch.

"I wanted to build an ecological ranch on Tianshan Mountain, just like the Russians who cultivated Siberia and the Japanese who cultivated Hokkaido," said Xiaolei. They grew sunflowers for oil pressing, alfalfa, wheat and trees and dug a fishpond. They even planned to build a tourist resort project nearby.

Most importantly, Xiaolei wanted to raise his cattle and sheep in a scientific way that drew on Western experience. He says Chinese people used to slaughter old cattle for meat

and their lives. He gave them gifts, such as a pair of American sunglasses, a cigarette lighter and a pair of binoculars. In return, the locals would take him as a guest and treat him to a whole month of free meals or repay him with sheep several times the value of his own gifts.

From 1985 to 1989, Xiaolei lived in this harsh environment, in spite of a serious lack of funding and the hard lifestyle. But in 1989, a rare opportunity emerged. An American ranch owner arrived in Xinjiang to negotiate with the local government over a cooperative operation and he met Xiaolei by chance. He was so surprised to find a Chinese person living like a cowboy in a frontier town. The two immediately became friends. Drinking whisky by the fireplace in Xiaolei's wooden cabin, they began to dream up their grand plan of cooperation: Xiaolei would raise the cattle and the American investor would build a slaughterhouse. It all seemed promising, but then the plan was scuppered by bad luck.

In 1990, Xiaolei organized the Tianshan Herder's Festival. To get sponsorship and raise money, he invited a famous American country singer to do a travelling show. Partly because of Xiaolei's lack of experience in organizing such an event, the whole thing came to a sudden



Xiaolei with one of his beloved horses



Inspecting the stables



Photos by Bao Wei

any benefit, his life fell to its lowest point with the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in 1966.

In 1967, both his parents were sent to be reformed through labour, and Xiaolei was sent to live with the family of a relative who shared a crowded Chinese courtyard in Beijing with a martial arts teacher and an old royal prince of the Qing dynasty. These relatives were also intellectuals, but the family lived in abject poverty and often didn't have enough food.

Xiaolei recollected, "someone would come to the hutong at dusk to collect garbage, which every family put outside the door. We couldn't afford the coal, so we went from house to house with a small spade to beat the burned coal balls, and took half burned ones home for re-use."

Xiaolei lived like this for almost 10 years until the Cultural Revolution ended in 1976. This experience not only formed his independent character but also taught him to do unconventional things contrary to traditional Chinese beliefs. "Both agriculture and cattle breeding are very traditional businesses in China," he says. "The only thing is, most Chinese don't think that they should be done by someone of higher education."

Sheerwood horse farm

In 1994, having lived as a

drunk and for two years, Xiaolei finally woke up. A friend of his owned some well bred horses and wasn't sure what to do about them before going abroad. Xiaolei offered to build a small horse farm in Beijing to keep them. It became a mission and he decided to expand the farm. He named it Sheerwood Beijing International Equestrian Club, in memory of the cattle ranch he once had in Xinjiang. His goal was to build the first modern equestrian club in China.

Today you can find the club after a long drive along a pitted earth track to Xiaolei's horse farm. Towering trees line both sides of the road and a river runs beyond the reeds and grassland in the distance. The farm is built along Wenyu River in Jinzhan Country near the Capital Airport just under the flight path of the landing planes. Each day, the graceful shadow of landing planes sweeps across the blue sky, a marvel of modern transportation. But at the end of the earth trail, a more traditional form of human transport can be found, at Xiaolei's Spanish-style stable.

It is here that Xiaolei began his new dream. But it looked pretty different when he arrived, with piles of garbage and mounds of earth. Only after numerous rounds of tough dealings with various authorities and contractors was Xiaolei able to turn it into "Wenyu River Ecological Corridor" and to have his horse farm designated a sport tourism centre.

Xiaolei has always been a perfectionist. He employed specialists from Holland to train his staff and he requires them to speak English. He even encourages appreciation of classical music, gardening and aesthetics. And everyone who rides the horses must be decked out in the imported British outfits. Xiaolei wants to build an equestrian training base of international standard for the upcoming 2008 Olympic Games

in Beijing.

Just as everything seemed to be going well, troubles emerged. When he rented the land from the local people, it was worth only 80 yuan per mu. Knowing the hardship of the people, Xiaolei agreed to raise the price to 200 yuan and signed a contract to rent 5,000 mu from them for 30 years. But as the land price went up with the recent economic development, a real estate developer coveted the land and together with the locals brought a lawsuit against Xiaolei. Even though Xiaolei won that case, a new lawsuit to requisition the land has begun.

Meanwhile, Xiaolei has started to prepare for 2008. He wants to build an equestrian school by collaborating with international equestrian sport organisations, The Education Ministry and China Agriculture University. As he says, "there are specialised equestrian schools abroad, but we don't have them in China. I hope what I'm doing will set a milestone in China and make China's equestrian sport a professional sport." His school will soon begin construction and enrol students in 2006.

With all these concerns, Xiaolei still remembers the life he used to have in Xinjiang. He learned how to make a fire quickly there, one of the basic skills required for outdoor survival. Within a moment, a huge fireplace in his clubhouse is blazing with a fire he has made, showing a gleam of satisfaction on his face. At dusk, a burning sun begins to set down over the horizon. Resting his arms on the white railings and looking at the scene he has worked so hard to create, Xiaolei can't help remembering his ranch on Tianshan Mountain, the backdrop of the distant forest, the stretching meadows and sparkling lakes. He says quietly, "someday, I'll go back."

(Additional information provided by Zha Jianying)

By Sabu Zhang

Dance can be art, ritual, or recreation. Nowadays, it has gone beyond its aesthetic form, deriving new meaning as a popular activity for all people. Whether their passion comes from the movement, the look, the music, the atmosphere, or their participation, people relax and express themselves through performance. Slow or frenetic, folk or exotic, uninhibited or elegant, solo or in a crowd, the varied forms of dance reveal much about different cultures and about the participant's own way of life.

Solo Ballet

Most people think of ballet as an elegant and elite art that can only be performed by professionals. To become a ballet dancer might be the dream of many young girls, but is it too late for them to fulfill their childhood dream in later years?

"Even those who haven't practiced dance before can learn it," says Jacqueline, a dedicated ballet fan who once took a ballet tutorial and has learned the basic movements. "People of all shapes and sizes came to the class. Some 30 year olds are still crazy about it."

She introduced a ballet BBS (www.balletalk.com), which she described as an important website. "It is not simply a fan club. There are many eminent people participating who enjoy the art, including professional dancers of the National Ballet."

The website is comprehensive in its coverage of the current bal-

let scene, with reviews of recent ballet performances, discussions about dancing skills and advertisements for tutorials and ballet lessons for children. In a session especially designed for amateurs, Chinese ballet fans from all over the world chatted about local ballet classes they participated in, some in Canada, some in Japan, some in Italy.

Wherever these people are, ballet seems to be an essential part of their lives. Referring to the health benefits of practicing ballet, Jacqueline commented, "It will help build your figure by stretching your body. You can naturally lose weight since the practice will somehow curb your appetite. It is really a nice way to shape your body."



Ballet class at Junju Ballet Club

Photo by Guo Shi



Photo by Salsalatinchina.com



Salsa Heat

Salsa is a distillation of many Latin and Afro-Caribbean dances. It is similar to Mambo in that both have a pattern of six steps danced over eight counts of music. However salsa has more turns and moves side to side.

It comes from the street, free of style and full of passion, accompanied by Latin music. It is a vibrant, passionate, fun and social dance, with irresistible music that will move your body. Unlike the other Latin dances - rumba or samba, it requires no sophisticated costumes or steps, no fixed partners and is much more relaxed and liberated. It feels more elegant compared with disco and less restrictive than waltz or tango.

Other dances are basically limb movements, while salsa moves your waist, crotch and belly. For women, it somehow enhances their unique features, combining tempting wriggles and twists.

It not only soothes the nerves but also shapes your body. "You won't get the same effect by going on diet or wearing a corset," Latin dance teacher Liu Yang says, "Salsa is a perfect way to keep fit, especially for those women who work in an office under great pressure. It's relaxing, good for the health and fun to learn."

Salsa parties are hot in town, thanks to a number of salsa clubs that emerged last year, adding spice to Beijing's nightlife and bringing a whole new form of recreation.

Salsa Caribe Club, next to the Loft, has the biggest dance floor in town, where their Cuban band and international Latin DJ keep your body moving. You can enjoy throbbing rhythms, dazzling moves and great Latin food there. Every night, you can learn Salsa or other Latin dances with a 20 yuan ticket. After 9:00, the Cuban band takes the stage.

Party girl Zhuang Jie said, "I used to like chill out music. But I'm tired of that already. I was drawn to salsa dance because it's so sexy and passionate. Salsa parties are my favorite now. I like it because there will be no strangers bothering you so you can totally enjoy the wild movement."

Live house

A glance at the huge posters on the front wall of Tango will tell you how many of the world's top DJs have played here: Australia's Phil K, world hottest DJ Sasha, electric sound genius DJ Mason, new Breakbeat leader from the UK - DJ Hyper are just some of the names that have attracted dance fans to this high-class, hip and young new venue.

The decor is pure exuberance. It is a huge, four-storey "entertainment supermarket" with luxuriant, dreamy and mysterious ambiance, a perfect place for erotic fantasies. The atmosphere is so strong that nothing feels real. Every person dancing in the pool forgets the others. It is their kingdom, their own live show. They are the very center of the performance.

Folk dance
Yangge folk dancing is old-fashioned, but still popular in this modern city. Yangge has a long history and is closely connected with the lives of people in the rural areas. It still attracts middle-aged and senior citizens, groups of whom can often be seen performing the dance in squares, parks or under crossroad fly-overs, some wearing bright costumes and holding props like a fan or ribbon, accompanied by the sharp sound of the *suona*.

Every year, Beijing holds a yangge competition between groups from different districts. These days yangge gets a new meaning with the addition of a drum tempo of Beijing opera or even pop music. "Dancing yangge is simply something to do for a happy mood. When the PLA came to town, we welcomed them with a yangge performance, long long ago," says Auntie Wu. Everyone was in high spirits, at the same time, they regain their passion, and look younger and happier.

By Wang Yao

As fashion and culture collide in the new century, more and more overseas bands are including China in their world tour itineraries. One of the latest such visitors was Swedish punk band International Noise Conspiracy, who played at Yugong Yishan on the first weekend of 2005.

The evening's entertainment was due to kick off at 9:30, but before the headliners took the stage, five local bands performed in support of the visitors. One of these was the ever-popular girl punk band Hang On The Box. Their appearance on stage aroused the attention of a large part of the audience, both Chinese and foreigners. When singer Wang Yue sang "The next station is Shanghai, Shanghai," the fuzzy sound had the audience pogoing.

Hang On the Box were followed by punk stalwarts PK14, who performed recent hits such as *Shuohua de Shanghou* (*Spoken Wound*) and *Hongse Lieche* (*Red Train*). Singer Yang Hai urged the already excited crowd to even greater feats of exuberance.

The last supporting band was Muma. When lead singer Xie Qiang sang *Zai Yanguang Xia* (*Under the Sunshine*) many fans joined in to sing the chorus, while *Fei Fei Run* brought the first climax of the performance when Xie Qiang jumped into the crowd and pogoed with the excited fans. By this time, the small club was holding almost 600 people.

When the clock struck midnight, International Noise Conspiracy finally appeared on the stage, prompting a mad scramble to occupy a position in front of the stage. Singer Dennis Lyxzén, guitarist and keyboard player Sara Almgren, guitarist Lars Stremberg, bass player Inge Johansson and drummer Ludvig Dahlberg, all dressed in red, declared the pogo party open!

Pogo Conspiracy

From the beginning of their first song, the more energetic fans pushed to the front and jumped happily to the music. Others were content to try to find a good vantage point further back in the small room.

International Noise Conspiracy play 70's-style hard rock, with lyrics straight from the heart and straight to the point. In the tradition of the Dead Kennedys and Rage Against the Machine, they combine well-written, catchy songs with radical politics, creating a highly explosive mix of music, noise, dancing, sexuality, fashion, street fighting and sweat.

Singer Dennis Lyxz says of the band, "I would probably say that we are a rock band made up of a group of people who all very much embrace their punk rock roots. As far as labels go though, we are very careful not to use them, since a lot of times that will limit the expression of the band."



Photo by Cong Feng

"It's easy to see how people might find it strange that we sing about the things we do, knowing where we are from, but what it comes down to is the fact that injustice and segregation exist everywhere, on a global scale. Therefore, even if you would argue that Sweden has a relatively higher standard of living than a lot of other countries, you still need to realize that class differences exist in the same way in more privileged societies as well as less privileged ones. The other thing is the fact that we have a division of living standards between different countries, which is also a direct effect of the same economical structures that set the class differences on the national scale. The fight for a class-less society has to be fought on a global scale, so therefore we feel it becomes as valid in Sweden as anywhere else."

What's New

By Tom Spearman

CD

The Orb: Bicycles & Tricycles



Though 15 years have passed since the release of their debut, The Orb are still best known for their hypnotic and hilarious sample of Ricky Lee Jones talking about the little fluffy clouds in Arizona sunsets, set to a blissful ambient anthem for a new summer of love. So has their style changed much since then? Thankfully not, although main man Dr. Alex Paterson is a little more eager to offer something for everyone on this most recent album, throwing rap, house and techno into the mix. This is a tighter, more structured album than much of The Orb's output over the years, in places actually resorting to tunes; good ones too. There are nods to fellow electro-ambient legends Future Sound of London, but the samples and rhythms are all distinctively Orb. This is certainly their best album since 1992's U.F. Orb and a welcome riposte to those who claim the loosely termed "dance" genre has run out of creativity.

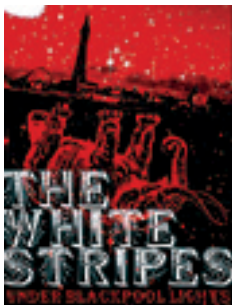
DVD

Finding Neverland

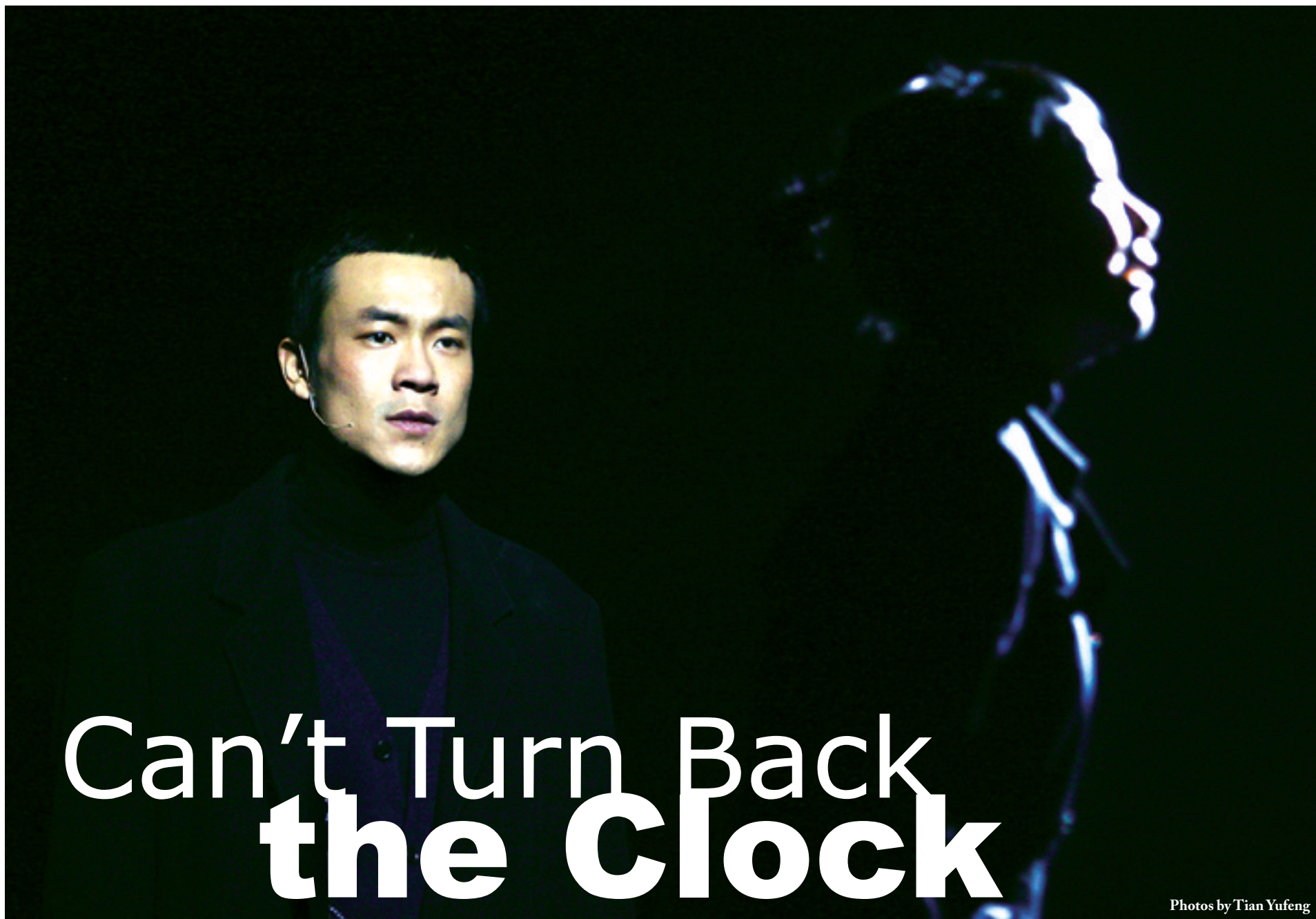


Tipped for a best actor nomination amid early Oscar speculation, Johnny Depp makes a surprisingly believable JM Barrie, author of legendary fantasy *Peter Pan*. Playing a buttoned-up Victorian gentleman seems quite a diversion from the swaggering bandit of *Pirates of the Caribbean*, but one thing Depp has mastered in both roles is tricky British accents: he does a pretty good job with Barrie's Scottish brogue. The film follows the birth of Barrie's idea to write *Peter Pan* as he befriends widow Kate Winslet and her four sons. His relationship with them is an escape from his own loveless and childless marriage, allowing him a sense of fatherhood and giving the children a more vivid childhood as they stage various imaginative games and build an unlikely relationship with their new friend.

The White Stripes: Under Blackpool Lights



Englebert Humperdink, Yanni, Leo Sayer, Bryan Adams; Beijing's music DVDs seem to be a last royalty haven for some of the worst sinners against music ever. But occasionally, in among the Westlife and Britney Spears, you'll find a real gem. Last year's pick of the crop was Led Zeppelin's mighty *How the West was Won*. And some choice new items are also now available, including this appearance by garage superstars The White Stripes in the British seaside resort of Blackpool. The picture quality is suitably grainy and lo-tech, but the sound will make you lust for the CD-slaying, surround sound DVD audio the record companies have been promising us for so long. The band sound amazingly tight and well practised. And while girls will enjoy Jack's implausibly tight trousers, guys will appreciate the sight of Meg bashing the skins, all flowing black hair, heaving cleavage and sweaty attitude.



Photos by Tian Yufeng

By Jacqueline Yu

Two drama-makers have come up with a new way for readers to find their way into the imaginary worlds presented by fiction: to read it on stage and let the audience build their own scenes for the whole story.

That's the simple rule for the drama *Ban Sheng Yuan* (*Eighteen Springs*), staged in the Capital Theatre from last Thursday till this Sunday, adapted from the novel by female Chinese writer Zhang Ailing (also known as Eileen Chang).

Before the show opened last Friday, the director and scriptwriter Hu Enwei and Lin Yihua appeared from behind the curtain and told the audience somewhat apologetically that the performance would last for about three hours. But they said they hoped the time would fly past.

Then the curtain drew up, revealing a library-like stage, with bookshelves, a long table and six wood chairs. The actors just moved between these chairs (suggesting the subtle changes of relationship between each character), saying their lines (sometimes

Despite the lack of traditional acting, every time the two main characters' eyes met, they would embrace each other.

reading), occasionally taking a book from the shelf, almost without eyesight or body communication. It was more like a story-reading workshop. They started from the very beginning of the story and went along the normal timeline. Shijun (male) got to know Manzhen (female) while both of them were working in the same office. They fell in love but ended up marrying people they hadn't expected to mar-

ry. Ten years pass and they meet accidentally again. They realize sadly that "we cannot go back."

Hu Encheng's stage design and a big round clock hanging on the stage helped to reinforce the feeling of not being able to turn back the clock. A gauze screen would sometimes separate the actors and audience, on which scenes of birds, fire, and water would appear, accompanied by music composed by Lan Yibang. And some of Zhang Ailing's lines used in her novel were projected on the screen. It was the most touching moment when Shijun found Manzhen, the girl he loved and who also loved him, and the big screen showed the words of this part in Zhang's novel. Sometimes these words were read aloud by the voice of Zhang Aijia, the famous Chinese movie director. Her voice also told part of the story and what the characters were thinking about.

Despite the lack of traditional acting, every time the two main characters' eyes met, they would embrace each other. This scene had a particularly moving quality, as Shijun (Liao Fan),

was hand in hand with Manzhen (Liu Ruoying). When Shijun shed tears next to Cuizhi (Hai Qing) on the evening of their wedding day, it was because he was missing Manzhen. Shijun looks to the sky painfully and says, "We're just like two mischievous children, doing something wrong."

Liu Ruoying, a pop singer and actor who was discovered by Zhang Aijia, was superb, so real in acting the unfortunate Manzhen (and "cheating" tears out of the audience). Liao Fan is totally different in real life to his character Shijun, so he found it challenging and interesting to get into the role.

Zhang Ailing's story is more than a love story. Through the documentary parts shown on the screen about the old Shanghai and Beijing city landscapes, the audience could see some of the passing of history, reinforcing the theme of "we cannot go back". If entertainment makes you forget, real art makes you remember, and this was certainly the case for tearful members of the audience.



A different kind of performance

More Ethnic Flavor Please

By Pan Hao

Five-act ethnic dance drama Wonderful World of Tie-Dye Girls proved one thing: working not only supports your living, but can also create some very fine arts, as the audience discovered at Tianqiao Theatre on Sunday night.

Directed by Hu Mingzhu, and danced by Ma Xiaoling and Wu

Manshen, Wonderful World of Tie-Dye Girls reproduced the daily life of Tujia and Miao minorities of Hunan province, and blended in a bit of fairytale and romance. Music was composed by Peng Changxing and the stage design was by Shu Qianlong. By using the tie-dyed craft of western Hunan as the framework and incorporating the five steps

of the tie-dyed process – spinning, weaving, tying, dyeing and rinsing – these intelligent, hard-working and lively women were portrayed along with the beauty of nature.

With the huge Tongche (Waterwheel), set at the back of the stage and fog rolling on the floor, the first scene introduced the birth of a new baby, her par-

ents standing by. The dance was arranged in a way to emphasize overall patterns in life and the colorful costumes kept lighting up the stage. Joy was the dominant emotion.

The second scene was full of lively music, the dance based on original Tujia and Miao culture and customs, and the group dance still remained dominant through the show. These dancers were in pairs to present the themes of love, and the movements were all based on original ethnic dance forms. The backing music was also close to Tujia and Miao roots music. A female vocalist singing in Tujia and Miao style could sometimes be heard, adding to the whole ethnic flavor of the dance. Scene three was surprisingly peaceful, set beneath the soft moonlight and with romantic themes, while scene four introduced a bit of alcohol into the mix and was more rambunctious and fun.

All in all, the stage effects and stylish costumes were appealing to the audience. It was a shame that the original music and dance were perhaps polished a little too hard in some ways, so the dance maybe lost some of the charisma which ethnic arts have. The same applies to the music; the original



Photos by Tian Yufeng

Tujia and Miao music was ruined in some parts by the use of synthesizer rather than using the real instruments. Real ethnic music should have played a bigger part in the show.

Luo Weifeng, a grade two student from the ethnic dance department of the Central University for Nationalities, said, "The dance was too simplistic." He expected more from these professional dancers. However, he and his classmates Li Jun and Lai Weiwei all praised the beautiful costumes and stage design, and enjoyed the ethnic content of the show.



Talking jobs and corporate culture:

Bertelsmann Offers Books and Jobs

Every bookworm in China is familiar with Bertelsmann because of its book club. But the international media group is actually much more than that. Its global business includes RTL Group, the biggest European broadcaster; Random House, the largest book-publishing group; Gruner and Jahr, the biggest European magazine publisher; and BMG, a company in the music market. In addition, Arvato provides media services and Direct Group is the global leader in media distribution through clubs and the Internet.

With attractive business operations around the world, job opportunities at Bertelsmann drew considerable attention from students when Rachel Ji, Bertelsmann China's HR manager, chatted on www.54club.com, answering questions about opportunities to join the company, its selection standards, and the team contribution in Bertelsmann China.

Experience Bertelsmann:

Q: Could you please introduce how one could join the company?

Rachel Ji: From 2005, we will steadily increase the level of staff recruitment. This year, we will hire at least three university graduates, who will spend 18 months working in various positions and departments.

For example, according to his interest, he may first work in the marketing department for three to four months, then transfer to the publishing de-

partment, and then the HR department to recruit new staff. We hope that in this way he will get an idea of what Bertelsmann is and what he really wants to do in the company.

Selection standards:

Q: How do you evaluate and select the students to work in the company?

Ji: For all the staff working within the company, there are four general standards. They are communication skills, management ability in planning, leadership, and attitude.

Q: Could you please introduce more details about the four standards?

Ji: First, communication in Bertelsmann means team spirit and the ability to express ones self. For instance, how you convey your ideas with short and concise sentences, or how to make a speech in Chinese or



English.

Second is management and planning. Every employee needs to possess this ability, in terms of managing time and making a proper schedule.

Third is leadership. Usually, someone's ability to lead others can be seen in the way they carry out daily business. The ability to persuade your colleagues to follow your ideas and achieve the final result will make you shoot up and have the potential to be a manager in the future.

Fourth is attitude, which is the most important when we select newly graduated students, because they don't have much experience. We can judge whether they are appropriate for the company, for instance by

Rachel Ji, Corporate HR and PR director, Bertelsmann China.
Photos by sina.com

assessing perseverance, sense of responsibility and the ability to keep learning.

Team contribution:

Q: You have mentioned several times that Bertelsmann achieves its success by relying on team spirit. Could you please say something regarding team contribution?

Ji: I'd like to take the HR department as the example. We have five to six colleagues working as a team. As leader, I must make the purpose of everyone clear through our efforts and communication.

When we have the same destination to go, we need to be strict with ourselves and guarantee the quality of the work. The weekly meetings will tell us at which stage we are, and determine how we solve the problems that others have encountered. During this process, we establish the trust among everyone, and understand more about each other. As a result, we work just like a family.

Q: Is that how you keep your staff in the company?

Ji: For sure! I think an excellent team can ensure the profit of the company, from which we are paid our salary. We still have our first Chinese staff member, who has stayed with the company for 10 years and has been promoted to the position of manager of the publishing department. We hope excellent students will join in us and cultivate more local managers in Bertelsmann China.

(Edited by Xie Lixue)

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Chen Yurong, Ph.D of consuming psychology and master of economics, has been a housekeeper, reporter, editor, economic researcher, market analyst and promoter. Currently, I am the general manager's assistant at the Zhejiang-based Zhengbei (Pearl) Co. Ltd. and manager for development planning at Beijing Zhenbei Sci & Tech Co. Ltd. I'm looking for a better job.

Personal website at:

www.chenyurong.com,

Tel: 010-6707 4612,

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Female Beijinger, 39, is looking for a job and has a decade's experience in import-export business, human resources management, interpretation and secretarial work. Good command of computer skills and am good at English, both writing and speaking.
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A Beijing-based English newspaper is looking for reporters, freelancers and editors.

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Hottest Sectors Hiring More Students

By Zhao Hongyi

A survey by employment website zhaopin.com reveals that the hottest sectors in terms of employment in 2004 were manufacturing, consultancy and IT.

With China becoming one of the world's primary manufacturing centers, skilled workers are in high demand, in areas such as digital controlling, electric and electronic controlling, machinery manufacturing and automation, mould design and manufacturing, equipment repair and maintenance, and electric and electronic equipment installation. Experienced workers familiar with the latest technologies in these sectors are relatively rare.

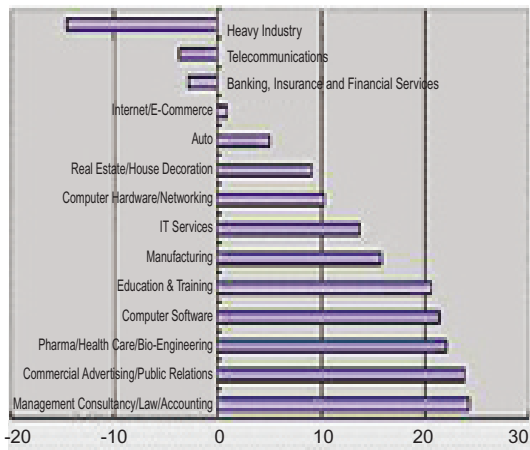
The second hottest sector is consultancy, which recruited 24 percent more new employees in 2004 than in the previous year.

The IT sector has seen consistent growth in recent years, and recruitment in the software sector increased by 21 percent nationwide last year.

The sector is more interested in young people, with more than 90 percent of new employees under the age of 35. In addition, the sector pays less attention to academic background. Most of the new staff in the sector are university graduates and technical school graduates.

Aside from the above sectors, pharmaceutical manufacturing, real estate and telecommunications were also hot last year, though wages have seen a relative fall compared with the prosperity of previous years.

Increasing rates of new staff recruitment in the hottest sectors in 2004



Leadership West Point Style

By Zhaoxi Liu

For the first time in history, faculty from the leadership program of the West Point Military Academy in the US came to China to talk about the West Point way of leadership, which has turned out not only generals and presidents, but also thousands of business executives in the US.

On Saturday, Lieutenant Colonel Todd Henshaw, director of Leadership and Management Programs at West Point, discussed the characteristics of leadership with students and alumni of the Beijing International MBA (BiMBA) at Beijing University.

To create leaders of character, who can live up to the expectations of followers, is the goal of the 200-year-old West Point, Henshaw said. Those expectations, he outlined, include courage, ability to make decisions, integrity, persistence, empathy for subordinates, expertise, adaptability and resilience.

"At West Point, we value good leadership," Henshaw told the audience, "Good leadership can change the institution and benefit both the leader and the followers."

When asked how West Point trains high-school graduates to become such leaders of character, Henshaw described the West Point training system as starting with a very selective admission process. The school then sets and maintains very high expectations and standards, establishes a set of core values and culture, among which are the well known values of duty, honor and country, and develops its own theory of development. All of these are not unique to West Point, but could be replicated at other institutions as well, Henshaw said.

"Why is West Point able to produce not only generals, but also CEOs of leading corporations? We wanted to find the answer to this question," BiMBA dean John Yang, who presided at Saturday's workshop, said in the opening statement. Toward the end of the day, Yang said he almost got the answer.

"West Point aims at training people's virtue, character and comprehensive competence, not just a general," Yang told *Beijing Today*. "They train people to possess a set of ideas, behavior, character and value, which work not only in the battlefield, but also in business and government."

Yang said this kind of training is applicable to China, and is what now needed here.

"We want to train students to be well-educated, with competence and superior judgment, and it is crucial to train their character in a comprehensive way," he said.

It took nearly four years for Yang and his program to bring the West Point teaching of leadership to China. Along with Henshaw at the workshop was Major Stephen Ruth, leadership instructor, who talked about power and leadership.



Lieutenant Colonel Todd Henshaw



Major Stephen Ruth lectures at BiMBA

Photos by Wang Xilin



Splendid Australia:

Australia is becoming one of the top destinations for Chinese students seeking to further their education abroad.

In the first several weeks of this new year, Beijing Today will host a running program called Splendid Australia, in which vice chancellors, presidents and international directors of Australia's "Group of Eight"

universities will be invited to chat with readers in our "Study Abroad Salon" (http://211.99.23.46/bjtoday_bbs/).

In the first installment, Dr. Jim Sait, director international of the University of Sydney, talked about some of the specialties and advantages of his university, which he said was the oldest in Australia.

Our next Australian guest will be Dr. Don Gregg, general manager for international affairs at Monash University, who will log on to the salon at 1 pm on Monday, January 24.

You are welcome to participate in the discussion or forward your questions to the host, Ayi, at: ayi@ynet.com.

USYD: Australia's Oldest University

In the more than 150 years since the University of Sydney (USYD), Australia's oldest "uni," was established in 1850, it has developed an excellent reputation and educated such distinguished public figures as World Bank President James D. Wolfensohn and Australian Prime Minister John Howard.

USYD is a member of Australia's Group of Eight universities, testimony to its strengths in the academic and research fields. The university professes to provide the most comprehensive range of courses and programs in Australia's higher education system.

On Monday, Jim Sait, director international of USYD, was our guest in the Study Abroad Salon and spent an hour answering a slew of questions from many curious Chinese students.

Basics and courses:

What are the strongest academic programs in your university?

— gorilla

All our academic programs are very strong. We review them regularly to see what improvements or enhancements we can bring to them. Our students are world leaders in many different professions ranging from astronomy (physics) to veterinary science.

We are very strong in economics and business, science, engineering (we work with many universities in China), health sciences (medicine, pharmacy, allied health sciences), architecture and our Conservatorium has an excellent reputation.

How many international students are there in your university? And what is the number of Chinese students?

— smessage

USYD has 45,000 students. Of these, 46 percent were not born in Australia. But only about 8,000 are full fee paying internationals. That means that quite a lot have become Australian citizens.

The number of Chinese students who are from the PRC would probably be about 2,400. But many other students would be from ethnic Chinese backgrounds.

How many semesters do you have?

— monkeyking

We have two semesters (starting in March and July) and we also have a summer school (in January and February) and a winter school in July.

International students particularly find the summer school useful as it means they can often complete their degree one or two semesters earlier. They study for four semesters and three summer schools. It is a big saving for their families.



Jim Sait, director international, USYD

Do you have any exchange students programs with Chinese universities? And do you have any joint programs here in China?

— picture

We do have some exchange students from Chinese universities, but not very many undergraduate students. We are trying to arrange more. These are students who come here for one year and pay a full fee. They then count their year here as part of their studies in China. They can also come for one half year.

Campus life and part-time jobs:

Can you introduce your library to us? What kinds of materials and books can students find there?

— JackieZhang

Our library has a very large on-line service. This means that students can access articles on line. It also means if you are searching for a book, you can look for it on the Internet rather than having to go into the stacks.

We also have many units of study which are backed up by more information on the web (particularly in economics and business). Lecture notes are often posted on the web so that students have more time to concentrate on lectures.

We often have previous year's examination papers too, so that students can see the sorts of questions that are asked.

What are the requirements for students to do part-time jobs?

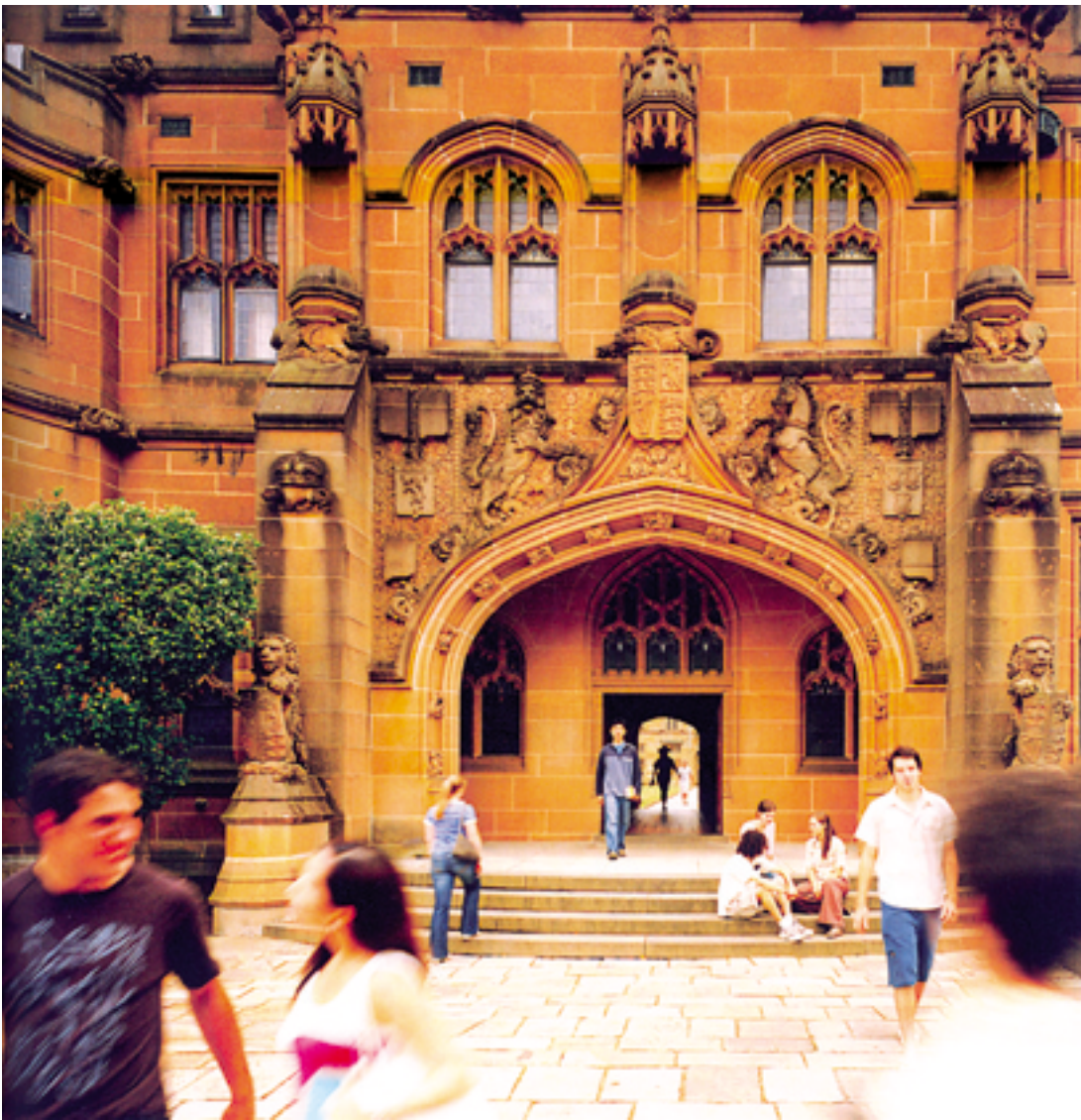
— jimkerry

Part-time jobs vary depending on students' time and their English language skills. Some students get work with small companies. Some take jobs in restaurants and stores.

We have a service which helps students find jobs. They can work up to 20 hours per week, though we would prefer that they spent their time concentrating on their studies.

Scholarships, applications and diplomas:

Do you offer undergraduate students scholarships? What about scholarships for postgraduate students?



USYD's main gate

We don't offer undergraduate scholarships for international students unless they have completed their last year of school in Australia. Then if they achieve very well, we offer them a scholarship.

Some companies also offer undergraduate scholarships but they are done through the companies.

There are postgraduate scholarships that you can apply for. The most common is the Australian government's international postgraduate research scholarship. These are for students doing their doctorates. Every student who applies for a doctorate will be assessed for a scholarship and told whether they will or are likely to get one.

I know the IDP agency represents your university here in Beijing. Should I ask them to help me apply to your university?

— samuri

There are many agencies representing the University of Sydney in China (check at: <http://www.usyd.edu.au/io/agents/>). IDP represents all Australian universities.

You can get an agent to help you apply to the University of Sydney, but only those agents on our list are actually qualified.

How long will it take for my application to be processed? What can I do to



The university's economic and business faculty

Photos by USYD

make my application more likely to succeed? Will it be easy for my parents to come see me? Does the school accept payment by credit card?

— ilovebj

It currently takes three to six weeks, but it is going to get quicker this year as we have a new system.

To make sure that your application will succeed, put in all the required documents, make sure that you have compared your materials with the university's admission requirements and send it by the fastest means.

It is very easy for your parents to visit and the university accepts credit card payments

(Edited by Zhang Nan)

Survey of Chinese Oversea Students:

Realities of Life Abroad

By Zhang Nan

(Continued from last week)

Due to their international background, respondents had high expectations for payment when they returned to Chinese soil. Just under 41 percent said they expected to earn 10,000 yuan a month once back in China and 23.2 percent set a target figure of 6,000 to 7,999 yuan.

However, the survey indicated that such expectations may be far from realistic – in fact, simply finding a job once back in China can present a chal-

lenge. Of the respondents who had already returned, 57.5 percent were able to find jobs within the first six months. Many said they struggled because of their high salary expectations and lack of practical experience.

Emotional problems

Loneliness is a problem that plagues many Chinese students abroad, a factor that just under 50 percent of respondents agreed was the hardest challenge faced while living overseas.

Finding or living without love is another possible source of

pain. About 23 percent said they had left significant others behind, and even those that hadn't said they suffered from separation from friends and families. Facing potentially years apart, just short of 67 percent of those in serious relationships said they could wait for reunion, while a less optimistic 16 percent said they would choose to split up with their partners before leaving home.

Reason over emotion

The survey's findings indicate that many Chinese stu-

dents seem to be casting off the unrealistic expectations of the past and honestly thinking about what studying abroad will entail. Around 64 percent said that going to a foreign country to study was not a shortcut or sure bet to jumpstarting one's career or ensuring a comfortable future.

Most took the pragmatic view that learning abroad was about expanding one's knowledge and strengthening personal abilities.

More than 64 percent confessed that real conditions in

foreign countries were very different than what they had imagined when they left China.

Money is an issue in every student's life and one that seems to keep many Chinese studying abroad from having lots of fun. Among the many students who paid their own way abroad, 96.5 percent said they had taken on some kind of part-time jobs to make ends meet. That compares rather unfavorably to the slim 17.5 percent who said they regularly took part in social activities during their foreign studies.

Ask Ayi:

Q: The UK is becoming the hottest destination for Chinese students, but I worry about the high tuition and living expenses there. Are there any scholarships available other than the limited ones from universities?

A: Many scholarships are available beyond campuses if you are pursuing serious academic study and research.

The first choice is the China Scholarship Council (CSC), which funds government-sponsored students. You can apply for a scholarship from them as long as your field of study is in line with the Chinese government's priorities. Learn more and download the application form from www.csc.edu.cn. Applications must be submitted by the end of January.

The British Council China Office, the de facto education section of the British Embassy in Beijing, also provides a number of scholarships, such as the Chevening Scholarship, Scotland Scholarship, Bond Scheme and British Institution Scholarship. You can learn more at www.britishcouncil.org.cn.

The British Academy, the national academy for humanities and the social sciences in the UK, also provides many fellowships, scholarships, awards and other types of funding to international students. Their website is www.britac.ac.uk.

The UniversitiesUK, a joint organization of academic institutions in the UK, has a Overseas Research Students Award Scheme, which provides many types of scholarships and awards to excellent international students. Their website is: www.universitiesuk.ac.uk.

The Royal Society, an independent scientific academy of the UK dedicated to promoting excellence in science, provides sound financial support to outstanding students in the fields of science and technological research.

For details, please visit www.royalsoc.ac.uk, or contact china@southeastasia@royalsoc.ac.uk.

Many other institutions and organizations provide specific funds and scholarships, such as the:

Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council;

Engineering and physical Sciences Research Council;

Economic and Social Research Council;

Medical Research Council;

Natural Environment Research Council;

Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council;

and the Arts and Humanities Research Board.

(Edited By Ayi)

Ireland Modifies Policies towards Foreign Students

By Zhang Nan

Ireland now prevents non-European students enrolled in programs not certified by Ireland's Department of Science and that last less than one year from finding part-time jobs in the country, according to a warning released by China's Ministry of Education last week.

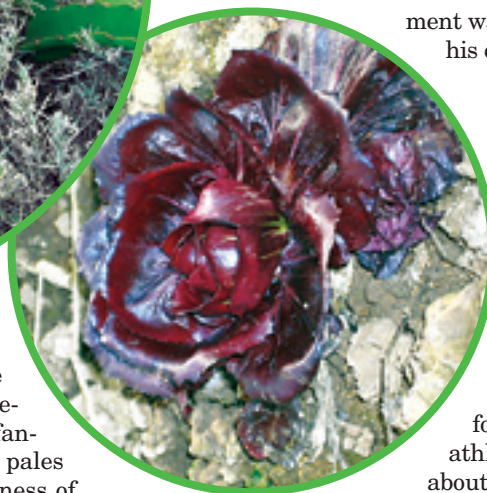
Effective immediately, only students accepted to certified programs due to last at least one year can stay in Ireland for prolonged periods of times – other students can stay in country for no more than 18 months.

Students already registered with Ireland's immigration service can stay for a maximum of 18 months starting January 1.

The country still offers more work opportunities than many other European countries, and students are allowed to take part-time jobs that can pay around 10 to 12 euros an hour. Some Irish universities give students one year to pursue internships.

Ireland has an excellent education system very similar to that of the UK while its study expenses tend to be just 60 percent of its neighbor.

Putting the Green in Green Thumb



By Annie Wei

The organic food movement has come to Beijing, but done so pretty quietly. In recent years there has been much more fanfare about "green foods," produce that pales in comparison to the purity and naturalness of true organic products – the kind available in limited quantities at a few supermarkets and on a much larger scale at a farm on the outskirts of the city run by some local South Koreans.

The story of the farm is the story of a group of people dedicated to the whole ethos of organic farming, which emphasizes using nothing but natural materials from the ground on up, with the goal of protecting the health of people and the planet.

"Many people take part in environmental protection activities in South Korea," said the manager of the farm, Jeong Seiong Yeol. "We have slogans and we have lectures. But, that's not what will actually protect the environment. We have to follow up the talk with real action."

Beijing Tianshou Organic Farming Co. covers 500,000 square meters of some of Beijing's purest soil in the North Taolin area of Changping District. It has not made profit in its eight years of operation, but founder and owner Oh Soo Jong says cash is not the motivation.

Today, the farm's relatively small client base is mostly made up of local South Koreans. Yet word is spreading and the farm's time may have come, seeing as domestic media and consumers are becoming increasingly aware of and concerned about the dangers of dodgy produce, be it genetic modification, toxic pesticides or the toll of standard commercial farming on the environment.

Olympic Inspiration

Jeong, formerly president of a South Korean environmental protection organization, told *Beijing Today* that while popular, the organic food move-

ment was relatively new to his country.

"The idea of organic food came to us in 1970s, but it didn't really catch on until 1988 when Seoul hosted the Olympic Games," he said.

At the time, South Korea produced no organic foods, forcing foreign athletes concerned about performance and possible contamination to import food stuffs from their own countries or from closer Japan, Jeong said. The idea took hold and the South Korean government decided to back the development of domestic organic farming.

For Jeong, running the farm is a labor of love. A devout Catholic, he wakes at 4 am, prays until 6, and then works alongside his staff until noon six days a week except Saturdays, when he goes to church.

Just as the Olympics inspired Koreans to go organic, the approaching 2008 Summer Games in Beijing could have similar effect.

"By 2008, Beijing plans to have 13.3 million square meters of organic orchards and 40 million square meters of organic vegetable farms," Jeong said.

The municipal government had already chosen the company to be its partner in the organic push, and the Beijing Forestry Bureau sent staff to the farm three times a week to learn about organic farming practices, he added.

The farm was chosen because, Jeong said, "We are the best and we provide true organic food."

It has not been easy. It takes three to five years to turn soil

spoiled by chemicals into true organic dirt. The fact that Tianshou has had to undertake that process with all its fields goes a long way to explaining why it has yet to see a profit.

Slowly taking root

The city's first shop specializing in organic produce opened near in the popular Nvrenjie area of Chaoyang District early last summer, but ended up closing after just four months. Most of its more than 200 regular customers have since shifted to getting produce directly from the farm or from another shop run by Song Young Ya in the Wangjing Xincheng community, where she and many other local South Koreans reside.

"I love organic stuff! To me, organic foods are just common sense. They are healthy, safe and taste good!" Song said.

Song, a friend of Oh Soo Jong, had a similar reaction to Chinese vegetables when she first came to China 10 years ago – too many chemicals. It inspired her to get into the organic trade, if only for the benefit of her community and the environment.

"This is not a money-making business yet. The main reason for building and investing in the farm is to provide healthy food for the Korean community in Beijing," she said.

Part of the problem in drawing more customers has been prices. Vegetables grown at the Tianshou organic farm fetch on average between 5 and 15 yuan per 500 grams and its fruits cost 15 to 30 yuan for the same volume, far higher than regularly-grown domestic produce and even imported products.

But Ms. Ma, a professor at China Agriculture University told *Beijing Today* that as people's incomes and educations improved, they would be more willing to foot the bill to better protect the environment and their own health.

Organic or just green?

Many consumers may also not really understand the differences between real organic produce and the fruits, vegetables and other food products carrying the "green food" label that



have become familiar sights at grocery stores around the city. Green foods tend to cost significantly less.

The difference is simple. To qualify as organic, no chemicals or pesticides can have been applied at a farm or orchard for at least two years. But even in grade-A green foods, artificial fertilizers, pesticides and other chemical agents can be used in limited amounts to protect and enhance crops.

Converts to the organic philosophy think even limited use of such chemicals – to say nothing of the massive amounts commonly used in commercial farming – is too much. Scientists have shown that chemical fertilizers and potentially toxic pesticides seeping into China's soil and water are causing the steady degradation of the ecosystem and slashing possibilities of future sustainable soil use, according to the China Center for Environmental Education and Communication.

A trip to the Tianshou farm is an excellent introduction to the glories of organic farming, even in the winter when the fields are bare. Last Sunday, Jeong showed particular pride in long rows of little, spiky cactus plants growing in a greenhouse that also contained pungently fragrant rosemary bushes and more.

The farm's bounty gets cooked up at an on-site restaurant that serves healthy vegetarian food. "You should come in the spring, we get a lot more customers then," Jeong said.

Produce from the farm should start showing up in some local hotels and supermarkets in June, he said. It is one small step in the Tianshou's farm larger goals.

"We have set a business model of helping other farmers learn to grow organic food and helping them find a market for their products," Jeong said.

"As the market expands, more farmers will be able to profit and more people will be willing to use organic farming practices. Then prices will come down and farm soil will be able to return to its natural state."

–NEWLY OPENED–

THE DINER'S IN THE DETAILS



Photo by Li Shuzhuan

By Gareth George

Paul Astephen knows how to cook pork chops.

"We put a little oregano with it. A little house seasoning. And you know what the secret is? Just before it comes out of the pan, squeeze on the juice of half a lemon. Seals in the flavor and stops it tasting dry."

That kind of attention to detail is what has made his restaurant, Steak & Eggs, the best American diner in Beijing. If you head over to Steak & Eggs, just behind the Friendship Store in Chaoyang District, you're likely to see Paul in the kitchen or talking to his customers. He works 16 hours every day.

And if you get a chance to talk to him, you'll see he's picked up a thing or two from his 40 years in the restaurant trade, and even before that.

"My father was a grocer and my mother was a pastry chef," he says. "I grew up on the East Coast of Canada. Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. We always had fresh ingredients in the house. My mother baked bread every morning. Of course, I learned a few things by necessity. So when my mother got sick – was virtually wheel chair bound for a year – I made the bread. I think I was 12, and it gave me the greatest feeling of pride. I still feel that pride. I'm happy as long as I'm producing good food and the customers are happy."

Dining out Western style here in the capital usually involves a compromise: you either pay top dollar or end up with something that just doesn't taste like home. When Paul first came to China, to travel with his girlfriend Yang Yang, now Steak & Eggs' manager, he noticed the same thing. "We arrived during SARS, so we couldn't go anywhere, and I started to notice a niche in the market. One I felt needed filling."

The restaurant has done that and then some, and become such a hit that Paul is currently putting the finishing touches on a second Steak & Eggs, which officially opens tomorrow near the Western Academy. With a 16-seat counter, sit-down bar, soda fountains and ice cream machine, "it'll look just like a diner's supposed to," he says. And you can believe him. Because you know that it's not the facilities that will make the new place, it's the adherence to a belief in what a good restaurant should be.

"When I was young, my father would take us to the Riviera Diner after church. Like a ritual. A real ma and pa place, with hot chicken sandwiches, on Sundays a turkey or roast beef, mashed potato and gravy. We knew all the waitresses and they knew what we liked. That's what a real diner's all about. Good food, fair prices and friendly staff."

It's a formula that Steak & Eggs closely follows, from the simple decor to the no-pretense menu, stacked with solid, classic North American fare like fluffy biscuits, grits and corned beef hash at very reasonable prices. "My father always said, 'Sell for a little, but sell a lot, and you'll have more customers.' The steak and eggs is my trademark, so we go as low as we can [49 yuan]. The same piece of meat is maybe 350 or 400 yuan at the Regency [Hotel]."

And then there are Paul's pastries. You'll be kicking yourself if you leave without trying his desserts, from Key lime pie to cheesecake to apple pie just like mom makes.

The pie is just a part of the back-home, family feel Paul actively cultivates at his restaurant, especially on holidays when some foreign residents can feel a bit out-of-sorts in Beijing.

"At Christmas at my grandmother's house, there were maybe 80 or 90 people. My mother is one of 16, my father one of nine. Us kids used to sit on the stairs to eat our turkey. But I like having people around. That's why now, on the big nights like Thanksgiving, we make sure we know where everyone will sit before they come in. So we look like we're expecting them, not trying to fit them in. And we allow for two hours, so they can eat at their own pace."

Paul says he had a taste of more profit-driven, corporate-style food service and never took to it. "I worked for Howard Johnson at one time, managing the restaurant menus, but I hated it. I don't feel comfortable without my whites [chef's uniform]."

Strange as it may sound for a Canadian in Beijing, Paul quit because of the travel. "I like to lay down a base. To be able to see friends and say 'who's coming for beers on Saturday night?' I have that here. We have 300 to 500 people in on Saturdays and Sundays after Church, all greeting me and the staff and each other. It's home."

Old Steak & Eggs: **Where:** 5 Xiushui Nanjie, Chaoyang **Tel:** 6592 8088

New Steak & Eggs **Tel:** 8470 1550

Tianshou organic farm manager Jeong Seiong Yeol is not afraid to get his hands dirty to raise top-quality organic produce. Photos by Annie Wei

Drama: *Boeing, Boeing*

The drama tells how an architect wins the love of three airline hostesses. But what happens when all three happen to arrive at their boyfriend's home at the same time? Performed by famous Chinese comedic star Zhu Shimao.

Where: Chang'an Grand Theater, 7 Jianguomennei Dajie, Dongcheng **When:** 7:30 pm, tonight - January 16 **Admission:** 80-800 yuan **Tel:** 6510 1309

In Memory of Leslie Cheung

Through a love story between two fans of Leslie Cheung, this opera pays tribute to the iconic Hong Kong pop music and movie star, who was adored by his fans during his 30-year career before he ended his life by committing suicide in 2003. More than 20 classic songs of Leslie Cheung, including *The Wind Still Blows*, *Red* and *Love Pass*, will be performed during the opera. This is an occasion Cheung fans won't want to miss.

Where: Poly Theatre, 14 Dongzhimennan Dajie, Dongcheng **When:** tonight - January 16, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 100-880 yuan **Tel:** 6500 1188 ext. 5126



Performances

The Fire of Anatolia

As a part of the 2nd Beijing International Dance Festival, the Fire of Anatolia is again coming to China. The performers of *The Fire of Anatolia* had the honor of being the first troupe to perform in the Great Hall of The People in 2002. They are back to perform four more shows at the same venue. These selections use dance moves dating back to ancient Anatolia but embellished with modern choreography.

Where: Great Hall of the People **When:** January 20-23, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 180-1680 yuan **Tel:** 6608 1188

The Fire of Anatolia
Anadolu Ateşi



Dunhuang, My Dreamland

A restaging of *Dunhuang, My Dreamland*, originally performed in 2001. This dance aims to represent the scenes of the famous Silk Road. The show tells a tragic love story of a young artist and the daughter of a general in ancient times. Performed by the Lanzhou Song and Dance Theater which spent two years preparing for this show.

Where: Beijing Exhibition Theater, 135 Xizhimenwai Dajie, Xicheng **When:** January 19-23, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 180-880 yuan **Tel:** 6835 4455

Exhibitions



Exhibition of Chang Jin's Chinese Painting

Chang Jin, a famous Chinese ink-painter, was born in Nanjing and graduated from the Jiangsu Painting Academy. In his works of art, what we see is his calm understanding of life. The ink paintings are unconstrained, and full of the joyful emotion that expresses the artist's feelings.

Where: Soka Art Center, B-101 Tianhai Shangwu Dasha, 107 Dongsibei Dajie, Dongcheng **When:** January 15 - February 10, daily 10 am - 9 pm (closed on Monday) **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8401 2377



Across Tibet

Propelled by a love for the sacred place and people of the Tibet Autonomous Region, Yu Xiaodong lived there for a long time during which he traveled extensively to visit almost all the region's temples, castles and villages to conduct research on Tibetan religion, culture, landscapes and natural spirit.

Where: Qin Gallery, 1-1 E, Huaweili, Enjoy Paradise, Chaoyang **When:** daily 9:30 am - 5 pm until January 31 **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8779 0461

Jams

Easygoing

Easygoing may play high-energy rock and punk, but they always encourage a "suibian" at-

mosphere, which might include breaking things.

Where: What? Bar, 72 Beichangjie, Xicheng **When:** Saturday, 9 pm **Admission:** 20 yuan (includes a draft beer) **Tel:** 13910209249

Long Live the 80s

Music from the Me Generation's youth, brought to you the right way; new wave, ska, and punk rock by DJ Delta, a purist at heart. Listen for influences from Stray Cats, Iggy Pop and The Te.

Where: Vibes Bar, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang **When:** January 21, 9 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6437 8082

Activities

BJ Hikers

The hike starts from the Guan Di Miao temple. It takes about two hours to go up to the pass, and one and a half-hours to get down the other side. People who want to add a bit more to this hike can spend some time walking along the ridge before going down. The valley is wide and open, offering great views. The only sound is the singing of many different birds, including a woodpecker.

Where: Mentougou, west of Beijing **When:** Sunday, leaving at 8:30 am from the Lido Hotel outside of Starbucks **Cost:** 150 yuan (100 yuan for children under 12) **Tel:** 13910025516

Tour with Chinese Culture Club

Visit a private shadow Puppet Museum in the Beijing suburbs and watch three famous shows. You'll also have the chance to see the backstage manipulation of the puppets.

When: Sunday, 1:30 pm Meet at Chinese Culture Club (29 Anjialou, Liangmaqiao Lu, Chaoyang) **Cost:** 120 yuan (includes transportation) **Tel:** 8457 2772



Movies



Dear Diary

This film won the prestigious Director's Prize at Cannes, and was written and directed by filmmaker Nanni Moretti. *Dear Diary* is a collection of his self-reflections and observations on his

environment, organized in three segments. Starring Nanni Moretti, Carlo Mazzacurati, Jennifer Beals and Renato Carpentieri. In English with Italian subtitles.

Where: Italian Embassy, 2 Dong'erjie, Sanlitun, Chaoyang **When:** January 20, 7:30 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6532 2187

My Zodiac Year (Ben Ming Nian)

Directed by Xie Fei, starring Jiang Wen and Cheng Lin. China's economic reforms are just beginning as a young man is released from prison. Determined to make a new start, he rents a small booth and goes into business selling clothes. But everything changes after he meets a bar girl.

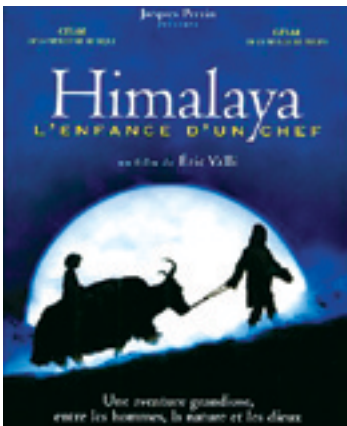
Where: Cherry Lane Movies Theater, 29 Liangmaqiao Lu, Chaoyang **When:** 8 pm, tonight and Saturday **Admission:** 50 yuan **Tel:** 13501251303

Himalaya

Directed by Eric Valli, who was a *National Geographic* pho-

tographer before he made this, his first feature film. This prior expertise comes across in the lush cinematography. *Himalaya* is a story about a power struggle in a caravan from Nepal across the Himalayas, and was an academy award nominee for Best Foreign Picture.

Where: Cui Guo Bar, south gate of Jimenli Area, Haidian **When:** January 17-23, 3 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6235 9559



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Accommodation

Furnished commercial/residential apartment of 106 square meters and with free parking is available for lease. The apartment is located on the 3rd floor of a five-star hotel within the northwest fourth ring road, close to shopping malls, banks, super markets and restaurants. US\$1,000 per month, plus utilities and deposit. Contact: Jennifer, 8844 7480, 13693189800, email: chouhwa@yahoo.com

Language Exchange

A Chinese male can make you grasp the Chinese language in a short time. Contact: 8697 9782, 13683693499

Professional

Zhang Ying, who has good organization skills, computer skills, driver's license, and positive personality with 11 years experience in teamwork, wants to find a position as a sales or bilingual secretary (Chinese, English). Contact: 13522968779

An international four-star hotel is seeking a Food & Beverage Manager or a Food & Beverage Director. Must be a Chinese citizen with fluent English. Prior experience in international hotel management preferred. Send your resume and motivation letter to gmanager@novotelxinqiaobj.com

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HBO

14 Friday

Mission Impossible 9 pm

15 Saturday

The Cradle of Life 9 pm

16 Sunday

Matchstick Men 11:50 pm

17 Monday

Fair Game 9 pm

18 Tuesday

Jumanji 10:50 pm

19 Wednesday

Multiplicity 9 pm

20 Thursday

Suspect 10:55 pm

CCTV-9

Monday - Friday

Around China 6:30 am

Culture Express 8:30 am

Nature and Science /

Chinese Civilization 11:30 am

Culture Express 2:30 pm

Nature and Science /

Chinese Civilization 5:30 pm

Dialogue 7:30 pm

News Updates /

Asia Today 8 pm

Sports Scene 11:15 pm

Saturday

Travelogue 9:30 am

Center Stage 11:30 am

Sunday

Sports Weekend 10 am

Documentary 10:30 am

This Week 12:30 am

China Radio International 91.5 FM

Monday - Friday

Easy FM Afternoon 2-7 pm

Fun in Beijing 5-5:30 pm

Joy FM 9:05-11 pm

Saturday

Music Memories 8:05-11 am

Euro Hit 40 12:05-1 pm

Musique Sans Frontières 6:05-8 pm

Joy FM 9:05-11 pm

Sunday

Music Memories 8:05-11 am

Jazz Beat 6:05-8 pm

Joy FM 9:05-11 pm

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By Zhang Jianzhong



Wall of Pastoral Charm

By Peng Juan

Rising and falling along the ridges of precipitous mountain ranges, the Great Wall descends through agricultural country to the ancient strategic pass of Gubeikou. Unlike any other section of the Great Wall, Gubeikou, literally “ancient northern entrance,” is surrounded by pastoral landscape.

Looking far afield from the top of the mountain, you can see the silvery river winding among the green mountains, distant lakes gleaming like fish scales, and farmhouses dotting the jade-like fields with smoke from kitchen chimneys curling upwards into a clear sky.

While not as famous as the Badaling section, the tranquility and pastoral setting of the Gubeikou Great Wall has its own unique attraction, with stone farmhouses and centuries-old temples and pavilions. Here, the Great Wall is not undergoing restoration; every brick has a history of more than 600 years and is well preserved.

Natural barrier

The 21-kilometer Gubeikou Great Wall lies 128 kilometers northeast of Beijing. In terms of strategic importance, Gubeikou ranks alongside Shanhaiguan Pass in Hebei and Juyongguan Pass in Beijing. These three passes once guarded the only major routes from northeastern China and Inner Mongolia to Beijing.

Geographically, the Gubeikou area refers to a 20-kilometer wide gap that cuts off the east-west Yanshan Mountain Range, eroding into an alluvial basin. To the west of the

pass are the Chaohe River and Wohu (Crouching Tiger) Mountain, and to the east is Panlong (Coiling Dragon) Mountain. The slope flattens off beyond the Great Wall, while in the valleys are many hidden mountain paths, which in ancient times were used by cavalry.

With Panlong and Wohu mountains in the background, the Gubeikou Great Wall is linked to the Qingfeng and Diecui peaks, which resemble two tigers – one on the east looking upward, and the other on the west facing down. The Chaohe River runs in front of the wall from north to south. The main section of Gubeikou knits Panlong and Wohu mountains into an integral whole to form what was once an impenetrable fortification.

Glorious battlefield

Since ancient times Gubeikou has been a prime target of the northern nomads in their advances on Beijing and the central China plain. Few sections of the Great Wall have seen as many battles as Gubeikou, many of which are famous in Chinese history.

The Gubeikou fortification was first constructed during the Northern Qi Dynasty in 555. It was named Beikou (Northern Entrance), after the opening in the middle of the stone rampart. Throughout the following dynasties, the fortifications were constantly reinforced.

When the Yuan Dynasty was overthrown, Ming Dynasty General Xu Da quickly captured Gubeikou from the retreating Mongolians and started work on its reconstruction. The new town of Beikou was built in 1378, protected by Chaohe River to the west and three gates to the north, east and south, as well as three underground water gates. A key line of defence, Gubeikou's importance increased even further after the capital moved to Beijing in 1420.

Many of the bricks in this part of the wall bear inscriptions stating the year they were made and the location of the kilns. These inscriptions indicate that construction was most intensive between 1568 and 1577. The inscriptions also record the designation of troops



Local residence

engaged in the construction work, providing evidence of clear-cut divisions of labor and responsibility. In the valleys on the southern side of the wall, ruins of lime and brick kilns can still be seen.

The Gubeikou Great Wall still retains its past magnificence, although sections of it were damaged by Japanese shelling during the War of Resistance from 1937 to 1945.

Towers and bricks of ages

The main part of the Gubeikou Great Wall that still stands today was constructed during the Ming Dynasty, with large flagstones for foundation and bricks each weighing 12.5 kilograms. On either side are two-meter-thick parapets topped by battlements, observation holes and embrasures.

The Gubeikou section has 143 beacon towers positioned at an average interval of 156 meters, although the nearest two are just 30 meters apart. The inside of these towers varies in design. Some have a flat ceiling, others have arched, domed, or even octagonal ceilings. Each tower, different in size, has two floors, six archways and ten arched doors, allowing garri-

soned soldiers to advance and retreat freely. On the beacon tower, the arched stone top looks like an ancient fortress, with observation holes on all sides.

This section meanders through mountains 400 to 900 meters high. Unlike other sections of the Great Wall, the Gubeikou Great Wall varies in width, with the widest part able to accommodate five horses walking abreast and the narrowest spot allowing only a single person to pass. Many cultural relics have been discovered in the vicinity, including arrows, bamboo guns, stone mills and knives.

Nearby sights

Linggong Temple

Linggong Temple dedicated to Yang Ye, a famous Song Dynasty (960-1279) general whose illustrious military family served the Song for four generations. Their stories of loyalty, bravery and romance have told in books, operas and by balladeers and minstrels. There are a number of temples in China dedicated to this general, but the one at Gubeikou is believed to be the earliest.

Yaowang Temple

Yaowang Temple, literally Temple of King of Medicines, is the pride of Gubeikou. It is a complex of temples and halls, the most famous of which is the ancient two-storey opera tower before the Laoye Hall. Buildings such as the Hall of King of Medicines, the Buddha Pavilion, and the Hall of Dragon King are also well preserved.

Three-Eyed Well

The Three-Eyed Well is one of the “Eight Scenes of Gubeikou.” The well, eight meters deep, is covered by an off-white round stone with three holes through which water can be fetched. The well has never run dry, even during times of drought.

Folklore villages

There are two folklore villages in Gubeikou. The Hexi Folklore Village boasts scenic spots like the Wohushan Great Wall, Yinshan Great Wall and an ancient mosque. Historic sites in the Beikou Folklore Village include the Panlongshan Great Wall, which remains in its original state, the ancient Northern Qi Great Wall and the ancient



A section of unrestored wall

imperial road, built in 1860.

The atmosphere at the folklore villages during Spring Festival is particularly vibrant. People make paper-cuts and paste New Year's couplets on their doorways, give folk art and yangge folk dance performances and set off fireworks.

Accommodation in the villages costs 30 to 35 yuan, including dinner. Reservations for the Spring Festival period should be made one week in advance.

Simatai Great Wall

Simatai Great Wall is connected to the north-east end of the Gubeikou Great Wall, and can be reached from Gubeikou on foot. Built along a cliff, the Simatai section is extremely steep.

Great Wall specialist Luo Zhewen once said, “The Great Wall is the best of Chinese architecture, and Simatai is the best of the Great Wall.” There are countless legends about the Simatai section, and it is the site of numerous historical relics. The highest point is the Fairy Tower, which rises 100 meters at an angle of 85 degrees.

Ancient Mosque

There is an ancient mosque on the west bank of Chaohe River in Gubeikou, which was the meeting place for soldiers of the Hui ethnic group stationed here during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). It is now a place of worship for the local Hui people.

Getting there: Take the long-distance bus from Dongzhimen bus station to Miyun, then change to a mini-bus to Gubeikou. A more comfortable option is the air-conditioned Beijing-Chengde bus from Xizhimen, which passes through Gubeikou, for about 30 yuan. There is also a daily train from Xizhimen Railway Station leaving at 7:00 am. By car, take the Airport Expressway to Beigao then turn on to the Beijing-Miyun Highway.

Skiing in Chaoyang Park

By Shannon Lee

While strolling through Chaoyang Park one will see the usual park activities taking place, calisthenics, kite flying, old men chatting and walking with birdcages in hand. However, there is one activity that seems out of the ordinary; large numbers of people bundled up from head to toe in snow gear skiing and sledding in the middle of downtown Beijing.

Chaoyang Park offers visitors a new wintertime park pastime. The Chaoyang Ski Park has opened its gates and is welcoming guests to hit the slopes. This small ski slope near that west gate of the park is a mecca for parents and grandparents introducing their youngsters to the art of skiing. It is also a hotspot for Beijinger's in their twenties to spend an afternoon.

It is the only ski park where proud mothers and fathers can wait at the bottom of the slope in dress shoes ready to catch their children as they whiz past on skis.

Ski enthusiasts may be disappointed with the small scale of the park, but it is a good alternative to the long journey required to reach any of the large ski runs.

The next closest ski slope is a good hour and a half journey out west to Pingguoyuan. While the park is compact, measuring ten thousand square meters, the slopes are able to please the majority of their customers, who tend to be rosy faced children testing out their ski legs or enjoying a day of sledding.

Since heavy snowfalls are rare in Beijing, a snowmaking machine is used to line the slopes. The park has two slopes that measure ten meters from top to bottom and two rope tows. Skis, gear and sleds can also be rented in the main building.

For the real ski fanatics, a trip out to Harbin's Yabali Ski Resort might be in order, however if you are a parent looking for an exhilarating outdoor activity for your children, or a beginner looking for a bunny hill to start out on, then Chaoyang Ski Park is ideal.

Youngsters and beginners alike can practice without fear of being shown up by advanced skiers. The park has a lively atmosphere with music and the constant sound of children's laughter, and is just the place for a fun-filled afternoon in the winter sunshine.

Admission: 20 yuan, children under 1.2 meter 10 yuan (50 percent surcharge during Spring Festival).

Skiing costs 60 yuan per hour on weekdays, 80 yuan on weekends and 100 yuan during holidays.



Photos by Li Shuzhuan



Local residence



Yaowang Miao (King of Medicine Temple)

Photos by Ding Fengyuan